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ABSTRACT

The collection of articles in this volume focuses on different kinds of folk literature from Bengal, Tamilnad, Bihar, Hindi-speaking North India, and Nepal. An introductory article by S.S. Wadley discusses types of folk literature in Karimpur. The remaining articles are organized according to cultural themes: "The Lustful Stepmother in the Folklore of Northwestern India" by V.P. Vatuk and S. Vatuk; "Songs of Social Distance" by D. Jacobson; "North Indian Wedding Songs" by E.O. Henry; "A Praise-Poem for Murugan" by B.E.F. Beck; "A Few Bengali Vaisnava Folk Songs" by R.D. Munda; "The Mundane and Prosaic in Bengali Folk Songs" by E. Friedlander; "Selections from 'Jarigan,' the Folk Epic of Muslim Bengal" by M.F. Dunham; "Twelve Jadur Songs" by N. Zide; "Three Nepalese Jokes" by J. Fisher; and "Four Folk Tales of the Gorum" by A.R.K. Zide. (JH)

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Guest Editor: Susan S. Wadley

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Susan S. Wadley

INTRODUCTION

An Overview and Consolidation

This volume on South Asian folk literature presents us with a broad spectrum of types of folk literature and topics found in it. First, a definition: by folk literature, we mean literature which is usually transmitted orally from generation to generation (and thus literature most often in the hands of anthropologists, as indicated by their predominance in this volume). The articles included here come from anthropologists and humanists and provide us with both translations and analysis of what first appears to be a heterogeneous assortment of folk literature styles and themes. Yet despite appearances, various types of unity exist: I will briefly mention some of these and then discuss two in detail.

Some of the orally transmitted literature is that of "culture brokers" or specialists (see the Vatuks' article on North Indian folk operas or Dunham's on Bengali Muslim bardic poems); some of it belongs to women only (who comprise a less-specialized group of "culture brokers" -- see articles by Jacobson on women's songs in Madhya Pradesh, Henry on marriage songs in eastern U.P. and Friedlander on girls' ritual songs in Bengal); some of it, in contrast, seems to be in general circulation in localized areas (see Fisher's Nepalese "jokes", N. Zide's Mundari songs, Munda's Bihari songs, Beck's epic poem from Tamilnad, and A. Zide's Gorum tales.) This volume could have been ordered around the type of transmitter of the given oral literature, or the level of specialization represented by the purveyor of that type of literature.

The volume could also be ordered geographically -- Bengal, Tamilnad, Bihar, Hindi-speaking North India, Nepal. Or we could look at the form: song (Henry, Jacobson, Friedlander, Munda, Dunham, N. Zide); tale (Fisher, A. Zide); poem (Beck); or play (Vatuk and Vatuk). We could also order it by the types of occasions when these various forms are used, the when and where of their use (although many authors give us little or no information on "context").

Studies on folk literature in both South Asia and elsewhere face two concurrent problems: those of translation (after collection) and those of analysis. Most of the scholars represented in this volume have attempted to cope, in varying ways, with both of these issues. The resulting dominant impression, to this reader at least, is of cultural themes pointed out to us by a group of very competent students of South Asia. I might add that another type of analysis, that of internal form, is totally lacking -- perhaps due to the anthropological bias of the contributors.

It is this impression of cultural themes which most fully unites the volume and which I have used to order it. The first articles, by Sylvia and Ved Vatuk, Doranne Jacobson and Edward Henry, are concerned with women's folk literature and/or ideas of "femaleness" found in oral traditions. The Vatuks' concern for the stepmother is very specific, although the

literature on which they draw is extensive. From this one idea of 'woman,' we move to Jacobson's paper in which we see women's concern with affinal relationships as found in various songs focusing on the distinctions between husband's house and father's house. Henry's paper on women's marriage songs is specific in terms of the context of their occurrence, but broad in terms of the cultural and social themes found in the many song feasts surrounding a marriage.

Brenda Beck's translation and commentary on a Tamil poem in praise of Murugan provides a transition point to the next series of articles, which are concerned with broader social themes: in the Murugan poem, those of 'femaleness' or 'wifeness' coexist with issues of caste, purity, eating habits, gods versus men, nature versus culture. Lover-beloved themes as well as implicit nature-culture ones link Munda's translation of Bihari *bhakti* songs to the preceding Tamil poem. Devotional themes from another religious tradition (Islam) pervade the selections from *Jarigan* provided by M. F. Dunham.

Eva Friedlander moves us consciously from the 'spiritual' concerns of devotional songs to the prosaic themes which are equally a part of much folk literature -- social and political developments, local events, etc. These themes, though with fewer overtones of change, are also found in the Mundari songs translated by N. Zide. If 'spirituality' dominated the middle section of this volume, the 'mundane' definitely takes over the end, particularly in the Nepalese jokes of James Fisher, most notable for their obscene humor. And three of the tales translated by Arlene Zide bring out similar themes: trickery involving food; an unacceptable (ghost) husband; and the stupidity of the old.

On a broader scale, we see a different thematic unity -- the concern with proper action versus improper action, with socially acceptable themes versus the socially unacceptable ones which continuously reappears throughout this volume -- for example, the step-mother attacking her stepson; the obscene songs sung by women at weddings; and ambiguous status of Murugan's second wife; the Nepalese jokes, and Gorum tales. Clearly different modes of folk literature have varying roles in dealing with the problems of culture. The folk operas and praise poem juxtapose proper action and improper action and provide some kind of resolution: the jokes, tales, and obscene songs themselves provide no resolution for their blatant expression of socially improper themes -- we must assume that the laughter which they are intended to provoke does.

This counterpoint between socially acceptable behavior and socially unacceptable behavior, between culture and nature, appears to be a dominant theme in South Asian folk literature. As Brenda Beck suggests in her commentary, the fluidity of literature allows the various aspects of this theme to be developed and resolved in a manner impossible for other artistic forms, such as sculpture and painting. And it may well be that one of the important components and values of folk literature is a fluidity unavailable to printed forms of literature -- such as the Sanskrit epics and their regional variants. Folk literature, by not being static, by being continuously reinterpreted and manipulated by its teller, can more easily deal with the contradictions of society, with the continuing changing relationships of culture and nature.

As I have suggested above, not all modes of folk literature have the same roles in dealing with cultural problems. And it is this concern which makes me to my second unity. The first article, my own, contrasts with the pattern of cultural themes dominating the others and I have included it here because in one important sense it provides another unity between the various articles. It is concerned with what kinds of folk literature do exist in an Indian village community, with who uses which forms, and, in a general way, with what themes are conveyed by which forms. It is, as the subtitle states, a catalogue of types. It suggests, I hope, that the many themes, specialists, and forms of folk literature in South Asia presented by the other authors in this volume could in fact be found in one locality: the emphasis on particular themes, specialists or forms. Karimpur might be different in another locality given the variations in marriage patterns, caste structures, eating habits, religion, etc., found throughout the subcontinent -- yet there is much similarity.

Let me delineate some of the differences and their Karimpur correlates. First, marriage: Karimpur's marriage patterns (Western U. P.) are most like those given by Henry concerning Eastern U.P. and little variation in content and themes is likely to be revealed by a close comparison of data from both places, although differences which do exist may be important. We could expect to find, however, divergent perceptions of marriage relationships in the women's songs of Karimpur versus those of Madhya Pradesh (Jacobson), though perhaps not radically different ones. If, on the other hand, we had comparable songs from South India, themes of affinal distance and correct relationships should vary considerably. (As a side point to this concern, the Vatuks and Brenda Beck would consider what happens to the step-mother in South India.)

Caste structures also change from one area of South Asia to another: I note that caste does not play a role in the stories of Nepal given by Fisher nor in the tribal tales provided by A. Zide. Humorous tales of Karimpur almost always include caste stereotypes as a major theme. Specialization by caste may also vary: Is it acceptable for Brahmans in other communities to sing the 'risque' songs of Holi? Moreover, Karimpur's Brahman women do not sing at lower caste weddings as do Henry's. We need to understand the other socio-cultural variables as well, that are (may be) related to variation in folk literature.

Religious variation is quite obvious: Karimpur does not have the Muslim epics of E. Bengal nor Kurugan, the 'South Indian' son of Shiva. Instead we find tales of Zahir Pir, a regional god who controls snakes, or songs in praise of the local goddesses. The girls' *urat* of Bengal from which Eva Friedlander takes her songs can be contrasted to the girls' *puja* in Karimpur during the nine days of Devi worship (October-November). Both the Vatuks' plays and Dunham's epic songs are the work of professionals: neither exists in Karimpur, but others do -- the Ram Lila performers who periodically visit, the Pandit and his lectures, the local folk opera performers.

Despite these many differences, and others not mentioned here, comparable forms, specialists and themes can be found in Karimpur for each of

the other articles contained here. There is, to be trite, unity in diversity. Pinpointing exactly where unity versus diversity lies and the varying factors impinging upon each would require more knowledge than we presently have (and more space than this journal provides.) I would suggest, however, going back to our first 'unity,' that a concern for the fluidity of folk literature, how it permits adaptability to the changing circumstances and needs of society, may provide some answers: most particularly we might be concerned with the flexibility of different kinds of folk literature and thus their varying roles in society. Comparative, thoughtful studies of South Asian folk literature are lacking. Perhaps this volume will provoke its contributors and other students of South Asia to explore more fully the richness of their informants' words.

Note

1. 'Change' here can imply both fundamental societal change as noted in the urban concerns in Eva Friedlander's article, or situational change -- the women's obscene wedding songs.

Susan S. Wadley

FOLK LITERATURE IN KARIMPUR

A Catalogue of Types

Although there are many articles on particular aspects of folk literature in South Asia, few authors have attempted to present the panorama of folk literature as found in any one community. Thus, we have very little information about the various verbal traditions available in a community and even less information on the contextual and textual variants of these. Many communities recognize different verbal traditions by distinctly labelling them (such as 'story' or 'myth'): these labels tend to correlate with variations in possible use, i.e., context, including the setting, participants, occasions, and with variations in text, including style and content.¹

In the discussion which follows, I present a catalogue of the many verbal traditions found in one village community in India. In addition, I shall try to sketch some of the contextual and textual factors related to these different verbal traditions. I intend to provide the reader with a glimpse of the range of verbal traditions with which the student of folk literature could concern himself/herself by discussing the kinds of folk literature found in a given community. Hopefully this discussion will provoke students of other regions of South Asia to detect similarly the types of verbal traditions in their communities and discuss variations in these as related to socio-cultural permutations.

The Village

Karimpur² is a village in Mainpuri District, Uttar Pradesh. Located in the Hindu heartland on the Gangetic Plain, it is approximately 150 miles southeast of Delhi. In 1968, 1,380 people divided among twenty-two castes lived in the village. Brahmans dominated the village, both economically (they own 54% of the land) and politically (pre- and post-independence headmen have been Brahman.) Various other numerically small 'high' caste groups are present. There are also a large number of 'middle' castes, dominated by the Farmers (*kāchhī*), as well as a number of lower castes. The layout of the village (three distinct settlement areas) and the 'untouchability' of the lower castes allow for little inter-caste socializing aside from close neighbors and those of equal status.

Agriculture is still the dominant source of income for most of the Karimpur residents, although some lower caste men also work as rickshaw drivers or as day laborers in Mainpuri, the district town ten miles away. A few other inhabitants work in factories or as peons in cities such as Aligarh, Kanpur, or Calcutta. Many of the men, but few of the women, make regular trips to Mainpuri to sell milk, conduct a court case, shop in the bazaar, sell grain, etc. A few men and teenage boys of Karimpur attend movies there once in a while. Those village boys who do attend high school or Inter-College go to Mainpuri daily to study -- these village boys are almost always Brahman or high caste (i. g., *kayastha*).

Although there has been a school in the village for over fifty years, the literacy rate remains low, particularly for women and lower caste males. The literacy rate for women is 9.4% and twelve castes have no literate women, compared to an overall literacy rate of 34.9% for men and only one caste without a literate male. Moreover, no village daughter has gone beyond 8th class, although a few wives have 10th class education.

Linguistically, Karimpur presents us with a complex situation. There is first a village dialect, with some variation among castes. This dialect is a combination of Braj (from Mathura to the west) and Kanauji (from Kanauj to the east): many features, phonological, lexical and syntactical, are very unlike standard Hindi. Many of the men, but few of the women, also control the Mainpuri 'bazaar' dialect, which incorporates some standard Hindi in a simplified fashion. Next, all school children are taught standard Hindi and are able to use it in conversation by the time they reach 5th class, although most conversations in the village are conducted in the local dialect. In addition, English and Sanskrit are taught in the schools from 6th class on, although neither is usually controlled well. Thus the low literacy rate and lack of educated women make the local dialect the primary mode of oral traditions.

Literacy and stronger connections to written traditions, particularly among the Brahmins, do produce variations in the cultural content and style of various verbal traditions. However, since most written literature used in Karimpur comes from locally printed or popular press bazaar pamphlets (in Braj or standard Hindi), I will continue to treat it as 'folk' literature, i.e., verbal traditions whose primary mode of transmission from generation to generation is oral.

One aspect of Karimpur social organization needs special note -- the women's world. Although there is some variation in the extent to which the rules are followed, according to caste and economic status, married women (wives) in Karimpur remain in purdah. For example, a Brahman wife will not leave her household complex without wearing a shawl (*chaddar*) pulled down over her face -- nor will she go out alone unless she is elderly. New brides among the lower status groups follow purdah devoutly, but the restrictions are soon lifted and they are often allowed some freedom of movement within the village. Grown daughters do not follow purdah in the parents' village (and marriages are village exogamous), but they too are usually restricted to paying group visits to their friends' homes. Wives of all groups do follow purdah rules (covering of the face) in the presence of older males or in front of their husband if one of their elders is present. Not surprisingly, most social interaction takes place in sexually segregated groups -- this sexual segregation as well as caste segregation have profound effects on the social organization of verbal traditions in Karimpur.

In the discussion which follows, Karimpur verbal traditions are examined in terms of their major stylistic categories (e.g., song, story) and the major contextual and textual correlations are sketched.

Song

Songs are the most visible verbal traditions in Karimpur as all adults and most young children know at least one or two. The singing of songs, for both men and women (in sexually segregated groups,) is a major form of recreation and entertainment, as well as a popular way of showing devotion to the gods. In Karimpur, songs are categorized by two criteria: content and melody. Contrary to most Western music, there is no one-to-one relationship of verse and tune, rather a series of verses with similar content will be sung to one melody. Often it is possible to categorize a song in Karimpur terms after hearing either the verse or the melody; that is, the content specifies the melody, or vice-versa. For example, there are two groups of songs, *malhar* and *savan*, sung by the women in the rainy season when daughters return home and swings are hung in the trees. These two types of songs are sung only at this time; the internal structure of each is different from all other songs; they have two distinct melodies, and the common theme of longing to be home in one's father's house swinging with one's girlhood friends.

Even in song categories where more than one melody may be used, the number of melodies available is very limited, e.g., *Chirtan* or *bhajan*, (both categories of song in which one sings praises to the gods.) Sometimes a particular melody will be used in two categories, e.g., a *bhajan* melody is used for a wedding song (*varna*) in which case the content provides the classification and appropriate contextual use.

I have identified thirty-one categories of songs used in Karimpur, each distinctly labelled, as noted in Table 1. Basic cultural themes associated with each song category and their probable use by sex are also given.

Caste, sex, and educational levels all influence the types of songs used, their content, 'style' and context.

The women's ceremonies and song fests are usually organized around one lineage or caste group, e.g., gathering to sing songs of praise for a new son. Only near neighbors of other caste groups would attend such events. On the other hand, men's groups tended to be more integrated by caste, perhaps because of their greater mobility, particularly for the many nighttime events.

There are no real cultural specialists related to most categories of Karimpur song (the singers of the ritual songs of *dank* and *jas* and the folk opera singers being the main exceptions.) However, there are recognized good singers in most households or communities and they are especially sought after for ceremonial occasions. One test faced by every new bride is her singing ability and the good singer is lavishly praised and quickly finds a niche in her in-laws' home. As a young girl or boy gets know for her/his singing, she/he will often consciously

increase their repertoire of songs to maintain or build up this identity. One blind Farmer teenage boy had an astonishing knowledge of songs and was continually being asked to sing in friends' houses.

Caste membership and sex are two critical correlates in the content of songs. Brahmins, for example, are not supposed to sing *phāg*, the 'risque' songs of Holi. In addition, men could not sing the women's songs of the rainy season or the songs accompanying life cycle rites. Women seldom sang songs of war or film songs nor those attached to possession rituals (*dank* and *jas*).

Table 1

Categories of Song in Karimpur

Type name	Sung By		Description/usage
	Men	Women	
Life Cycle			
<i>lori</i> (janner)		+	At birth of child relates events surrounding a birth and happiness of a mother, some have purely religious themes
<i>varmā</i>		+	At boy's wedding, some religious themes.
<i>varmī</i>		+	At girl's wedding, some religious themes.
<i>bhat</i>		+	When Mother's Brother gives clothes at wedding, semi-religious themes.
<i>gālī</i>		+	Abuse sung by women at a wedding.
<i>jyonār</i>		+	When <i>barāt</i> eats at wedding, semi-abuse.
Annual Cycle			
<i>malhār</i>	rarely	+	In Savan when swinging, secular themes concerning women.
<i>sāvan</i>	rarely	+	In Savan when swinging, secular themes concerning women.

Table 1 (cont.)

Type name	Sung by		Description/ usage
	Men	Women	
<i>phāg</i>	rarely	+	At Holi, religious themes.
<i>rasiyā</i>	+	+	Always about Krishna. Usually sung in <i>Phālgun</i> .
<i>ohhand</i>	+	+	When go to Devi's <i>pūjā</i> .
<i>jav</i>	+		To cause Devi possession.
<i>dhānk</i>	+		To cause Snake possession.
<i>ālā</i>	+		During rains, in honor of a mythological character.
General Religious <i>bhajan</i>	+	+	Praise of the gods, an act of worship.
<i>kīrtan</i>	+	+	Praise of the gods, an act of worship.
<i>ārti</i>	+	+	Sung at conclusion of <i>pūjā</i> .
<i>pad</i>	+	+	Similar to a <i>bhajan</i> , in praise of god.
General <i>gānā</i>	+	+	"Song", a category for anything not otherwise classified.
<i>dholā</i>	+		Folk opera songs (Nal and Motini).
<i>bārah māsī</i>	+		Description of the twelve months of the year.
<i>rangīt</i>	+		In time of or in celebration of war.
<i>thurmī</i>	+		Semi-classical short song, requires musical skill.
<i>gazal</i>	+	rarely	Based on an Urdu poem.
<i>kavālī</i>	+		Sung poems.

Table 1 (cont.)

Type name	Sung by		Description/usage
	Men	Women	
<i>dādra</i>	+		A popular tune (beat).
<i>snair</i>	+		Partially Sanskrit.
<i>ahrat</i>	+		
<i>jhap</i>	+		Song to a particular beat.
<i>khāyal</i>	+		As part of recited story, a short piece is sung.
<i>phitrī</i>	+	rarely	Film songs.

Another distinction between men and women is the manner in which they learn their repertoires: a woman generally learns a song from a mother, aunt or sister. A boy might probably learn from classmates, the radio or a movie. And whereas women generally are instructed by their elders of the next generation, boys more frequently are instructed by older age mates.

The style of a particular song is also strongly correlated with caste and sex membership. Some women were able to identify the caste of tape-recordings of women singing because of the drum rhythm used. Men, particularly the better educated Brahmans, use many more musical elaborations when singing than the women do, particularly since they will often use an harmonium for accompaniment, whereas the women use only drums. Their greater relative freedom, in contrast to women in purdah, as well as their greater literacy, allow them more contacts with 'great traditional' styles as well as with mass media.

Most types of songs are primarily oral traditions, not written ones. Those sung by women are almost exclusively oral traditions, although I did see a pamphlet of *malhār* (songs of the rainy season) being used a few times by high caste women and some school girls (again high caste) used copies of songs given in their textbooks. However, life cycle songs, the sole domain of women, were not even available in pamphlet form in the local bazaars. In addition, women's songs are almost exclusively in the local dialect with few English or Sanskrit borrowings.

In comparison to the women, the men more frequently used pamphlets of *kīrtan* or *bhajan*, but here again the literacy rates among the lower castes kept the influence of written songs limited, especially since intercaste song fests are rare. Radio and films had remarkably little effect on Karimpur song forms, probably because there was no continually working radio in Karimpur during my fifteen months' residence there and the

cost of the cinema prohibited most villagers from enjoying it. I did note, however, that when a film song was learned, it was only the words: the melody was dropped and the song fitted to a "traditional" *bhajan* or *kirtan* melody. Men's songs, particularly those of the upper castes, tended to be in standard Hindi or heavily Sanskritized Hindi. And some film song borrowings were highly Urduized (film songs are often heavily loaded with Urdu vocabulary.)

Thus an individual's group membership strongly influences his/her knowledge of and use of songs. Sex and caste appear to be the most important influences, with neighborhood membership and education having less influence.

Narrative

Narrative forms of verbal traditions were less numerous than song ones. Here expertise is very crucial and the good story teller is acclaimed and sought after.³ But in contrast to singing, which required participants and audiences to be sexually segregated, some stories were often told to mixed audiences.

Karimpur informants delimited three kinds of stories: *kahānī*, *kissā*, and *kathā*. *Kahānī* approximate our idea of "story" and they are brief, often humorous, and deal with real life (this world) characters. *Kissā*, however, are mythological: they are generally long, are often episodes of the "great tradition" epics (the *Mahābhārata*, *Ramayana* or puranas) or are legends of local or regional deities. While they deal with specific "religious" themes, they are not explicitly connected to ritual activity. The *kathā*, on the other hand, are an integral part of many religious observances per se. They are, like the *kissā*, mythological but their explicit purpose is to justify ritual activity. The rules for any *vrāt* ("fast") prescribe the tilling of the related *kathā* as part of that *vrāt*. If the corresponding *kathā* is not told or read, the ceremony is considered incomplete and its value is lost.⁴ *Kathā* can be told at other times, but rarely are, perhaps for they lack the entire value of a *kahānī* or *kissā*.

The use of written, versus oral, traditions of these three prose forms differs. *Kahānī* were exclusively oral traditions. Most *kissā* were oral but there were bazaar pamphlets of popular ones available and sometimes a literate renowned story teller would use them for inspiration.⁵ *Kathā*, however, represent an extensively used written tradition. Pamphlets containing *kathā* for the *vrāt* associated with each day of the week are readily available in the bazaar or at stalls outside major temples and cost from fifty pice to two rupees. One pattern seemed clear: the better known, and more geographically widespread rituals were usually accompanied by a written *kathā*, e.g., *Satya narayan vrāt kathā* (The Story of the *vrāt* of the true Narayan), whereas the lesser known more local rituals were connected with oral, *kathā*, e.g., *hāthī kī puja* (Worship of the Elephant).

Other narrative forms are written traditions (Hindi versions of the *Rāmāyana*, *Bhagavad Gītā* or *Sukī Sagar*): periodically read by a few of

the literate men, these longer religious works are one of the major sources of contact with verbal traditions not extensively known in Karimpur itself.

Another major contact with outside traditions is the sponsored lecture or '*kathā*'. While these '*kathā*' are not the same as those used in ritual, the underlying idea is similar. Some family or group will bring in a Pandit educated in religious texts at some eminent ashram. For one to seven days, the Pandit gives a religious discourse based on his own writings, usually developing themes from the Ramayana or Krishna legends (often he will read passages from these texts and then elaborate on their meaning.) These are very popular occasions and everyone attends at least once. For many women it provides a rare opportunity to get out of their household courtyards and to visit with friends and relatives. Pandemonium reigns supreme as women chat and children play and the audience constantly changes. Moreover, the highly Sanskritized Hindi was difficult for many Karimpur inhabitants to comprehend. Socializing dominates over intellectual benefits, but the lecture is given and heard and thus the village and sponsoring family benefit.

Another frequently found verbal tradition in Karimpur is the traveling drama group. The leader of one such group resides in Karimpur and this particular form (*dhola*) is well known in the village. *Dhola* was even for the troupe itself a totally oral tradition and the members of the troupe could improvise in each performance as long as they kept to the story-line (the tale of Nala and Motini.) I did eventually find a bazaar pamphlet containing *Dhola* written in the local dialect and printed in Mainpuri. Ram lila troupes also visit periodically and many men would visit the yearly Ram lila in Mainpuri. In addition, various drama groups are found at the district, with puppet shows being especially popular.

Ritual Sayings

Many specialists in Karimpur control various verbal traditions used in ritual: these vary from the Sanskrit *mantras* known or read by the priest (usually without comprehending them) at the time of life-cycle rites or for a fire sacrifice to the 'dialect' *mantras* used by oracles and exorcists in rites of possession or in curing rituals of various kinds. Many of these latter *mantras* provide fascinating insight into the amalgamation of Karimpur religious belief -- topics beyond the scope of this paper (see Wadley, 1973a and 1973b.) All are memorized and passed on from guru to disciple or father to son: comparison of an exorcist's *mantras* collected in 1968 with those collected by the Wiser's in 1925-30 shows only minor variation over this time span. Many of these *mantras* are either spoken too rapidly for most villagers to comprehend (if allowed to hear them: women are normally excluded from most possession rites) or are esoteric and equally incomprehensible. Thus although an extremely important oral tradition in everyone's eyes, their content has a slight influence on village thought.

Jokes, Proverbs, Games

I have classed these three types of verbal tradition together because they all revolve around the use of stereotypes and/or normally unacceptable statements. Proverbs are "moralistic" stereotypes; jokes use typical caste and sex stereotypes to make points unacceptable elsewhere and many children's games rely on caste and sex organization to develop the play (rather as we have cowboys and Indians.) The local dialect is normally used in all three of these.

Conclusion

Karimpur has many types of verbal traditions ranging from children's games to ritual sayings. The choice of one type of tradition versus another, and the specific item of that type, varies most significantly according to its content and the occasion for its use. In many cases there are also significant correlations between occasion and participants which further influence the "text" used, particularly in terms of style, including linguistic forms and performance.

Let me conclude by examining one such occasion: the birth of a son in a *Ray* household (Bard, considered locally to be low-level Brahmins.) It is the afternoon following the birth of the baby, and mother and son are secluded in the back room off the central courtyard. The baby's great aunt (Father's Father's Sister) has put auspicious designs (*satiye*) on each side of the door to the room of mother and son. As the mid-day heat begins to wear off, women and girls from the Brahman houses, the one other *Ray* family, and Scribe families begin to arrive. Daughters of the village predominate, with each family being officially represented by only the most senior wife. A few Farmer women, close neighbors, also slip into the courtyard. Some older women begin to decorate a water pot (*charua*) with auspicious designs made out of cow dung and barley seeds. A Brahman daughter of the village, home visiting her parents, who is noted as a singer and drum player, picks up the *dholak* provided by the host family and begins to sing a *lori*. Exhausted, the women gather up their shawls to return home, while the great-aunt distributes *batasa*, puffed sugar candies, to all present as *prasad*.

In this example, the occasion of a birth designates the type of song to be sung, *lori*, and thus the content of the songs -- either joy at the birth of a son or the mother's agony in birth and with her in-laws.

Because the birth occurs in a high-caste household, Brahman, Scribe (*Kayastha*) and Bard women from all parts of the village will attend. The few middle-caste Farmer women present live in adjoining houses; they will remain minor participants in the singing and will never lead or play the *dholak*. Correlated with women as the participants is the repetitious song form and lack of musical elaborations. The presence of educated Brahman women might suggest the use of a bazaar pamphlet or a non-local linguistic form; however on this occasion the type of song

(*lori*) precludes these possibilities. *Lori* are not found in pamphlet form and are a completely oral tradition in Karimpur.

The preceding discussion aims to be suggestive rather than definitive. In order to understand fully the complexity of Karimpur verbal traditions, much more space is required. In particular, examination of the content of these traditions and their potential for insight into Karimpur culture has been largely ignored. To conclude on an even more suggestive note, here are two of the songs sung at the birth of the Bard son.

The pitcher has no water. How (will I) fill it?
On my head is the jar.
Below hangs my heavy stomach, (I) cannot move, how
(will I) get water?
The pitcher has no water, how (will I) fill it?
(My) feet slipped, (my) hipbone is broken.
*Nandlal*⁶ is born, (I) cannot move, how (will I) get
water?
Who will lift up the broken jar, Oh who will lift up
Nandlal?
(I) cannot move, (how) will I get water?
(I) cannot stand up, how (will I) get water?
(I) cannot stand up, how (will I) get water?
The pitcher has no water, how (will I) fill it?
Oh the *sas*⁷ picked up the broken pitcher, the husband
picked up *Nandlal*.
(I) cannot get up, how (will I) get water?
The pitcher has no water, how (will I) fill it?
Sas said to make small breads, Oh the husband said
to bring the *harira* for making *pajiri*.⁸
Bringing the goods, (how can I) bring water?
The pitcher has no water, how (will I) fill it?
Jasuda gave birth to a son, bliss spread in Gokul.
Came-came outside the call of the *dai*.⁹
The *dai* cut the cord, bliss spread in the palace.
Now the queen gave birth to a son, bliss spread in Gokul.
Came-came outside the call of the *sasuli*.¹⁰
The *sasuli* decorated the *charua*,¹¹ bliss spread in palace.
Jasuda gave birth to a son, bliss spread in the palace.
Came-came outside the call of the *nanadi*.¹²
The *nanadi* fixed the auspicious signs (*satiye*), bliss spread
in the palace.
Came-came outside the call of the *jithani*.¹³
The *jithani*¹⁴ did the grinding,¹⁴ bliss spread in the palace.
The *devar*¹⁵ shot the arrow,¹⁶ bliss spread in the palace.
Came-came outside the call of the Pandit.
The Pandit counted the numbers,¹⁷ bliss spread in the palace.
The companions sang blessings,¹⁸ bliss spread in the palace.
Jasuda gave birth to a son, bliss spread in the palace.

NOTES

1. This article is adapted from Wadley, 1973.
2. Karimpur is a pseudonym given this village by William H. Wiser (1933, 1958). It is the village of 'behind mud walls' (see Wiser and Wiser, 1971). For the sake of continuity in the literature, I have retained it. The field work on which this study is based was carried out between December 1967 and April 1969. The research was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation and by the South Asia Committee of the University of Chicago. Their support is gratefully acknowledged.
3. One lower caste, poor informant who spent hours telling tales into my tape recorder asked for a special gift for his troubles: a new shirt and pants to "wear in my in-laws' village when I am asked to tell stories."
4. I learned this fact forcibly one Friday when I was called upon to read the Friday *kathā* for my "sister-in-law," as I was the only literate Hindi speaker in the house. Twenty pages later, after many corrections of pronunciation, etc. my Hindi reading ability was improved, but not my patience. Somewhat to my dismay, I was periodically called upon to repeat the performance.
5. The only 'reading' done in Karimpur is either for school or for religious purposes, e.g., reading a chapter of *Sukh Sāgar* (a Hindi version of the Krishna legend) each day.
6. *Nandīāl* refers either to a new-born child or to Krishna, the son of Nand.
7. Husband's mother.
8. *Pajīrī* is a combination of *ghī* (clarified butter), *āttā* (wheat flour), *miṭhāī* (sweet), *jiro* (cuminseeds), *sonṭhi* (ginger) and *piparāmūl* (the root of a pepper) ground together and fed to the mother and family.
9. Midwife, of the *dhanuk* caste.
10. Mother-in-law.
11. A clap pot -- it is decorated with cow dung and barley.
12. Husband's sister.
13. Husband's older brother's wife.
14. A combination of *ghī* (clarified butter), *āttā* (wheat flour), *miṭhāī* (sweet), *jiro* (cuminseed), *sonṭhi* (ginger) and *piparāmūl* (the root of a papper) must be ground together to be given to the mother and family.

15. Husband's younger brother.
16. On the third day after birth, the husband's younger brother must shoot an arrow over the roof in all four directions.
17. In order to name the child.
18. As they are doing in the ceremony described here.

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THE LUSTFUL STEPMOTHER IN THE
FOLKLORE OF NORTHWESTERN INDIA

*Analysis of a motif
in Indian folklore.*

In the mid-nineteen-forties a lengthy ballad composed and sung by a locally prominent folk preacher, Bhis. Brāmacāri, attained considerable popularity in the rural districts of western Uttar Pradesh.¹ This ballad (or *bhajan*) purported to tell a recent and true story of one Dharm Pal, a young man of the village of Maharampur in the district of Basti, in eastern Uttar Pradesh. The other principal actors in the story were Zamindar Arjun Singh, the father of Dharm Pal, a man in his mid-fifties, Kam Kala, the latter's eighteen-year-old-wife, and Shantā Kumari, the young wife before, it had not yet been consummated, and Shanta Kumari, therefore, still lived with her parents and brothers in the nearby hamlet of Tyorhi. The outline of the story was as follows:

One day in 1935 Dharm Pal enters the house where he lives with his father and stepmother and finds his stepmother, Kam Kala, seizes the opportunity to make sexual advances toward Dharm Pal, declaring her passionate desire for him and complaining of her lack of sexual fulfillment as the wife of an elderly man. Dharm Pal is appalled at the suggestion that they should have sexual intercourse, pointing out that she stands in the relationship of a "mother" to him, and that such an act would be a heinous sin. She persists and refuses to listen to his remonstrances. Finally he leaves the house without giving in to her pleas.

Some time later Arjun Singh returns home to find Kam Kala lying on the floor, her hair and clothes in disarray, crying bitterly. After considerable prodding she tells her husband that while he was away Dharm Pal entered the house and sexually assaulted her. Arjun Singh is furious, calls for his son, and orders him to leave the house immediately. Dharm Pal does not attempt to clear his name by accusing his stepmother of the attempted seduction; he acquiescently leaves home, taking some money and a bullock cart, and sets out for his wife's village.

Three miles from his destination a storm comes up. In the darkness and rain he is set upon by four robbers who take his money and the bullock cart and leaves him, stripped naked, and tied to a tree. Unbeknownst to Dharm Pal, these robbers are the brothers of his wife. They do not recognize each other because they have not been in contact since Dharm Pal's marriage ceremony and because of the darkness and stormy weather.

After the robbers leave him, Dharm Pal cries out for help and finally a passerby comes and unties him. He arrives at his in-laws' home late

at night and tells them what has happened. They clothe and feed him, and while he is eating, the brothers confer among themselves. They realize who it is they have robbed and fear that they will soon be found out. So they slip out together and go to the police station where they explain their predicament to the *daroga*, the chief of police. They offer him four rugs and Rs. 100 to take Dharm Pal into custody and poison him. After some discussion, he agrees to do so.

The brothers then return home and advise Dharm Pal to go with them the next morning to the police and report the incident. He does so, but when he arrives there he is seized and put into a cell. Later, he is given poison in his food. When he realizes that he has been poisoned, he begs his guard to go quickly to his wife's home and tell her what has happened.

In the meantime, his wife sees her brothers returning from the police station without Dharm Pal. When she asks where he is, they evade her questions. She starts out for the station herself but meets the guard, Daya Ram, on the way. He tells her that her husband has been poisoned by the *daroga*. He also tells her that the District Collector is camped in a nearby village and advises her to seek his help. She runs as fast as she can through the fields to the DC's campsite.

Back at Dharm Pal's home, Kam Kala has a dream in which she sees her stepson bidding her goodbye. She murmurs in her sleep that she is sorry for what she has done. Arjun Singh hears her words. Rather than confronting her directly for an explanation, he tells her to get ready immediately, that news has come that one of her relatives is sick, and that they must go to visit him. The couple then set out toward Tyorhi.

By this time, Dharm Pal is unconscious from the effects of the poison, and the *daroga* and his men take him out of the cell, intending to throw his body into the canal. On the road they meet Shanta Kumari and the District Collector coming from one direction and Arjun Singh and Kam Pala coming from another. The Civil Surgeon who is with the Collector, examines Dharm Pal's almost lifeless body and gives him an antidote to the poison. Dharm Pal soon regains consciousness. He forgives his stepmother for what she has done. The brothers and the *daroga* are sentenced to life imprisonment. Dharm Pal and Shanta Kumari live happily ever after.³

The folklorist will immediately recognize this ballad as a typical representative of a folktale motif which is very widespread, not only in India, but in other parts of the world as well. Tales containing this motif have been indexed by Thompson (1955) under two separate classification numbers, K2111 (Potiphar's Wife) and T418 (The Lustful Stepmother, under the more general heading of Illicit Sexual Relations). This separation is apparently based on the absence or presence in various examples of the motif of a stepmother-stepson relationship between the seductive woman and her victim. But most scholars who have examined the occurrence of this motif in world literature have traditionally considered it as a unity.

As Dundes has suggested (1962: 102), the relationship existing between the man and woman may be considered a matter of allomotifemic variation (in Propp's sense) in the basic structural form of the story. This structure involves three main characters, a mother-figure; a father-figure and a son-figure, in the following sequences of events:

1. The woman attempts to seduce the son-figure.
2. The son-figure rejects her overtures.
3. The woman, in revenge, accuses him of (attempted) sexual assault.
4. The father-figure punishes the son-figure.
5. The son-figure is later discovered to be innocent and reparation is made (through human or divine agency.)
6. In some cases, the woman is punished for her misdeed; in others she is forgiven by the son-figure.

The earliest known version of this motif appears before 1200 B.C. in an Egyptian manuscript (in which the protagonists are a young, unmarried man and the wife of his much older brother -- c.f. Yohannon 1968: 1 - 13), and again somewhat later in the well-known Biblical narrative of Joseph and the wife of his master, Potiphar (Genesis 39). In the Greek myths, the motif occurs a number of times, most importantly in the tale of Hippolytus and Phaedra, dramatized by the playwright Euripides in the 5th century B.C. In India the motif is to be found numerous times in the classical literature -- the earliest clear example is from the *Jataka* tales, in the *Mahapaduma Jataka* (472), wherein the central characters are Prince Paduma, son of Brahmdatta, King of Benares, and the latter's second wife. In the later Buddhist literature the motif appears in a story concerning the great Ashoka, his queen, Tisya Raksita, and his son by another wife, Kunala (in *Divyavadana*). (See Bloomfield 1923: 147-149 for a discussion of this story, and also Yohannon 1968: 231-246). Keene (1962) and Bloomfield (1923) have discussed in some detail the occurrence of this motif in the Indian literary tradition, and the latter points out that the Lustful Stepmother incident is frequently fitted into a more lengthy and elaborate Fortunatus tale type, in which the attempted seduction and subsequent exile of the hero provide a springboard for an adventurous and ultimately victorious career (1923: 141-142). Such is the case in the Joseph story, and in some of the Indian parallels as well.

Relevant studies of this motif in world literature have tended to be comparative in approach; examples are presented from one or more geographical regions and their similarities and differences are examined. For example, Bloomfield presents in some detail twelve stories of this type from Indian classical literature, mentioning a number of others more briefly, and describes "the organic modulations which [the motif] undergoes in its manifold story connections" (1932: 143). Yohannon, taking more ambitiously the entire Old World as his literary spring, discusses, in the context of an anthology of prominent exemplars of the Potiphar's wife theme in literature (ranging from Spain to Japan and from 1200 B.C. to the mid-twentieth century), the principal "resemblances and differences among the stories" (1968: 2). Among these more recent scholars there has been little commitment to searching for actual historical relationships among the stories

stories under their purview, although such an interest has not been absent in the annals of folklore (cf. Lang 1913: 318) and literary scholarship. While assuming the existence of historical connections among many of the tales in which this motif is prominent (see e.g. Keene 1962: 162), these writers generally conceded that the motif owes its' worldwide occurrence more to the fact of "a familial experience common to all mankind" (Yohannon 1968: 2-3) than to diffusion from a common source (cf. Bloomfield 1923.)

In a recent review of Yohannon's work Greenway has expressed disappointment at the author's failure to grapple with the problem of the contextual environments, in their respective cultures, of the tales he presents (1969: 1004-1005). He thus makes a plea for a study of the significance of this motif to the bearers of the tale traditions in which it occurs, for the "why" of the motif, rather than the "what" and "how good" (Greenway 1969: 1001). The present paper is designed as an attempt to answer the need to which Greenway has so cogently directed attention and to consider specifically the question of the cultural context of the Lustful Stepmother motif in Indian folk literature.

In the two studies mentioned above of Indian exemplars of the motif under consideration (Bloomfield 1923 and Keene 1962), as well as in more general studies of this motif in world literature, emphasis is on the literary analogues of the Joseph story. This emphasis should not be taken to indicate that the motif is in fact limited to Indian literary as opposed to oral tradition. Aside from the question of the interrelatedness of folk and elite traditions in India, and the probable folk origin of much of the extant story literature in India, it should be pointed out here that the motif of the Lustful Stepmother is in fact a common one in the oral tradition of India up to the present time, at least in the region of northwestern India with which the present writers are familiar. While certain of the better-known literary tales of this type may have oral versions, for the most part the popular Lustful Stepmother stories of this region are not the same as those known to the Indian literary tradition. The most commonly heard in this region are the stories of *Rup Basant* and of *Puran Mal* (or *Puran Bhagat*). These have been reported more widely in other parts of North India as well. For example, Temple (1885: 375-456) has recorded a text of the *Puran Mal* story in ballad form from the Gujrala District of Punjab, and Bloomfield makes a brief reference to published versions of both of these folk tales, one from as far east as Bengal (1923: 163-164).

Folktales appear in a variety of genres, and it is often possible to find versions of these popular tales sung in the form of a ballad, dramatized by professional travelling folk opera troupes, as well as narrated by amateur storytellers in family gatherings. The story of Dharm Pal for example, has been found in a printed libretto of a *sang*, composed by a noted drama troupe leader of this region, as well as in the *bhajan* form referred to at the outset of this paper. Our data here are drawn primarily from folk operas.⁴ First, we have used a *sang* performance, recorded on tape, of *Rup Basant*. This performance by the troupe of

Bundā Mīr was given in the spring of 1970 in a village in Meerut District, U. P. Section. We have a number of printed librettos of *sangs* telling the stories of *Dharm Pal*, *Rup Basant* and *Puran Mal*, as well as four other stories containing variations of the Lustful Stepmother motif, entitled respectively *Gulab Kaur*, *Devar-Bhabhi*, *Jaimal Phatta* and *Bhabhi ka Pyār*.

A word about the latter sources may be appropriate. These librettos are part of a large collection of approximately 500 printed *sang* texts made in the course of a broader study of this genre of folk drama as it is found in western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. They are orally composed, but are set down in writing by the troupe leaders who have composed them or (since these leaders are often illiterate) by other members of their troupes. They contain the principal story line, important dialogues between the central characters, feature duets and solo songs and essential stage directions. They are printed cheaply and distributed in rural and small town markets. Their usual customers are literate village people or those of the town-dwelling and urban lower class, who read them as stories and also learn the songs for their own enjoyment. The *sangs* written by different composers on a single theme naturally often differ in minor details of the story, and the words of the dialogues and songs may differ considerably. But the *sangi* rarely takes marked liberties with main events of the traditional folk stories, which are already well-known to their audience. *Sangis* do, however, compose entirely original *sangs* on stories of their own invention, frequently drawing on popular motifs like that of the Lustful Stepmother. They also adapt stories from popular films. From internal evidence, and from the apparent absence of these stories from the older folkloric record in this region, we believe that the stories of *Devar Bhabhi* and *Jaimal Phatta*, in addition to the story first cited, *Dharm Pal Shanta Kumari*, are probably recent compositions or adaptations rather than traditional tales.

Our first step will be to recapitulate briefly the main story lines the tales with which we are dealing. We will limit ourselves to the part of the tale which displays in the Lustful Stepmother motif; in some of these tales the seduction incident is only a prelude to a much longer story of adventure for the male protagonist, and the details of these adventures are not directly relevant to our interests here.

1. *Rup Basant*

Main Characters: Rup (eleven years old) and Basant, two brothers, King Chatur Singh, their father
Sundra, their father's second wife, her maid

On her deathbed, the mother of Rup and Basant pleads with her husband not to take a second wife after her death, for the sake of their sons' well-being. He agrees, but some time later is persuaded to marry a young girl. This second wife is, however, housed in the palace in an apartment separate from that in which the young boys are living and they do not have any contact with her. One day they are playing ball and the ball goes over the wall into their stepmother's courtyard. Rup goes to retrieve the ball. The stepmother is struck by his beauty and attempts to seduce him. He refuses

and manages to leave. Later, when her husband comes to her apartment, she accuses Rup of sexual assault. Chatur Singh does not believe her story initially, but is convinced when her maid corroborates the story. He confronts Rup, who denies the accusation but refrains from revealing his step-mother's attempt to seduce him. Chatur Singh orders Rup executed. Basant, loyal to Rup, accompanies his brother and the executioner into the forest. The executioner takes pity on Rup and kills a deer, whose eyes and blood he takes back to the palace as proof of Rup's death. The two brothers go on to have many adventures. After twelve years they return home. Their father comes to know the true story and has his wife hanged.

2. *Puran Mal*

Main Characters: Puran Mal, a twelve year old boy
King Salvan, his father
Acchrade, his mother
Nunade, his father's second wife

When Puran Mal is born, the astrologer announces that his is an inauspicious birth -- he must be put away in a pit for twelve years, to be cared for by a nurse, lest he either die himself or cause his parents' death. This is done, and after twelve years he is released with much rejoicing in the kingdom. In the meantime his father has taken a second wife, a young woman named Nunade. When Nunade hears of his beauty, she demands of the king that he send Puran Mal to see her, and the king agrees. But Acchrade warns Puran Mal that if he goes to see this woman, he will be putting himself in great danger. Puran Mal does not heed his mother's advice, maintaining that it is his duty to pay his respects to his new stepmother.

When Puran Mal enters Nunade's apartments, she immediately begins to make sexual advances toward him, which he vehemently resists. She becomes very angry and tries to prevent his leaving, but he escapes through a window. Then Nunade calls her husband and complains to him that Puran Mal has tried to seduce her. King Salvan does not believe her story at first, but she is able to convince him that she is telling the truth and threatens to kill herself if Puran Mal is not punished by death for dishonoring her. At her demand, King Salvan orders Puran Mal's eyes gouged out, his hands and feet cut off and his body thrown into a well. He also orders Acchrade out of the palace. Despite his maimed condition, Puran Mal survives in the well for twelve years, at which time he is rescued by a holy man, Guru Gorakh Nath. His limbs and eyesight are miraculously restored. Puran Mal forgives his stepmother and his mother returns to the palace.

3. *Gulab Kaur*

Main Characters: Sher Singh, a young man
Sukhlal, his father
Gulab Kaur, his father's second wife

When Sukhlal, a wealthy man is widowed at the age of fifty, he marries a young girl, secretly giving her father Rs. 1000 in payment for her. One day Sher Singh's pet parrot flies into his stepmother's room and he goes in to fetch it. She makes sexual advances toward him, which he refuses.

and he leaves her. When her husband comes in, she tells him that Sher Singh has violated her honor. Sukhlal does not believe her at first, but she shows him Sher Singh's dagger, which he has left behind in his hurry to leave. Sukhlal calls for his son and demands that he leave the house. Sher Singh wanders through the countryside, becomes the servant of a rich man, and later, through a chance encounter, becomes heir to a kingdom and marries that king's daughter.

4. *Devar Bhabhi* (Husband's Younger Brother, Elder Brother's Wife)

Main Characters: Saleyman, the elder brother
Rangbir, his younger brother
Chandrā, Saleyman's wife
Prem, Rangbir's fiance

The father of Saleyman and Rangbir dies, leaving Saleyman in charge of the household. One day when Saleyman is away from the house, Rangbir enters Chandra's room on some errand and finds her alone. She makes sexual advances toward him, which he refuses. When Saleyman returns, Chandra tells him that his younger brother has sexually assaulted her. Saleyman confronts Rangbir with this report and, in his anger, stabs him. Rangbir falls to the floor unconscious and is presumed dead. Saleyman has him put in a wooden box and thrown into the Jamna River. The box floats downstream to his fiancée's village. There a washerman sees the box, pulls it ashore and opens it. He revives Rangbir, who tells him his story and asks him to call his father-in-law-to-be. His fiancée had her parents come, take Rangbir home, and call a doctor. He recovers, marries Prem, and inherits half of his father-in-law's property.

5. *Jaimal Phatta*

Main Characters: King Biramde
Malde, his younger brother
Jaimal, his son
Jaimal's mother
His mother's brother
His mother's brother's wife
His wife

King Biramde dies and Malde, his younger brother, takes charge of the kingdom. Jaimal is only a child, but Malde begins to worry about the day that he will come of age and claim his rightful share of the patrimony. He orders his barber to cut Jaimal's fingernails, using a poisoned nail-cutter. The barber tries to comply with this order, but three times the nail-cutter falls from his hand when he starts to cut Jaimal's nails. Frightened by this omen, the barber confides in Jaimal his uncle's plan. Jaimal goes to his mother and tells her what has happened. She suggests that they leave his uncle's home at once and go to live with her brother until Jaimal is old enough to fight for his rights.

Jaimal grows to maturity in his mother's brother's kingdom and his marriage is celebrated, but not consummated, there. In the meantime, his mother's brother, who is an old man, takes as his second wife a young girl of sixteen who comes from the same village as Jaimal's wife. When this girl

sees Jaimal in her husband's palace, she falls in love with him and takes the opportunity when they are alone to make sexual advances to him. Jaimal refuses to accede to her pleas that he sleep with her and she becomes angry. Later she reports to her husband that Jaimal has dishonored her, and Jaimal and his mother leave her brother's kingdom. Jaimal brings his wife from her parents' home to live with him and his mother in another city. Eventually he goes back to reclaim by force his share of his father's kingdom from his father's younger brother, Malde.

6. *Bhabhi ka Pyar* (Elder Brother's Wife Lover)

Main Characters: Vikram, a young man
Bhartrihari, his elder brother
His elder brother's wife (*bhābhī*)
Her Lover

One day Vikram observes his elder brother's wife in the embrace of another man. When she realizes that she has been seen, she is fearful that Vikram will tell her husband about her indiscretion. To forestall this, she goes to her husband and accuses Vikram of sexually assaulting her. Her husband is furious and exiles his younger brother. However, she is not satisfied with this, and in order to make sure that her secret is perfectly safe, she hires four executioners to kill him and bring back his eyes as proof. The executioners take pity on him, kill a deer in his stead and bring its eyes to the woman as evidence of the killing. She continues her love affair, but through a strange set of circumstances her husband eventually comes to know of her infidelity. He has her lover executed and sends a servant to find Vikram and bring him home. When Vikram returns, he forgives his elder brother's wife for her misdeed. His elder brother gives the kingdom to Vikram and becomes a *sādhu*.

It is perhaps worth inserting here that in the complete texts of these stories it is almost always asserted that the events being reported actually took place, and are thus historically based. In some cases the characters are widely-known historical or semi-historical figures (for example, in the story of *Puran Mal* who also appear in other tales or legends of the region. Even if the characters are not of this kind, they are typically placed in known localities (though not usually in nearby localities), giving additional credence to the notion that the story is based upon fact rather than fiction. This device is particularly marked in the story of Dharm Pal, where the village, district and date of the incidents (1935) are all specified early in the recitation.

Of these seven tales, or portions of tales, six are very clearly type specimens of the Lustful Stepmother motif. The structure of each follows very closely that outlined above for this motif (after Dundes 1962), and the variations of personnel do not introduce a significant changes in the basic story line. These tales, so closely related within a common cultural tradition, might almost be considered versions of a single tale, although they are not in any sense so considered by their narrators or by their audience. In the first four tales (Numbers 1, 2 and 3, plus the initial story of *Dharm Pal Shanta Kumari*) the seductive woman is, classically, the

stepmother. In the fifth tale she is the young man's elder brother's wife, and in the sixth she is his mother's brother's wife. These other kinswomen say he treated as "all-characters" (Fischer 1966: 129; cf. Dundes 1962 for the stepmother). The seventh tale (Number 6) is perhaps not an unambiguous example of this motif, since the crucial seduction scene is absent. However, the accusation, exile, and eventual vindication of the husband's younger brother follow the motif structure so closely in other respects that we have included it as a possible parallel.

The approach which we intend to take here is based upon the assumption that one function of folktales is to give expression to important social values, to culturally-shared assumptions about the nature of the world and about human nature, and to patterned social conflicts arising out of the structure of the social system in which they are produced. It is a commonplace to state that a story which is told and retold, dramatized and performed, sung and enjoyed and popularized for periods of decades and even centuries, must be communicating something to its audiences beyond the bare "information" that a particular set of possibly historical events, involving people with whom they are personally unacquainted, has occurred. Such a story is communicating something about human nature and about the way that adherence to certain values and norms can keep this nature controlled, can harness and restrain it in approved directions. It is saying something to its audience about how one ought to conduct one's own life, even if the likelihood of one's ever being placed in the situation of the story's protagonist is remote and perhaps not even consciously contemplated as a possibility. Such a story is also, perhaps, by causing its audience to focus attention on certain key points of social stress or ambiguity, allowing the acceptable resolution of certain "socialpsychological conflicts inherent in the particular social structure (and perhaps in life itself)" (Fischer 1966: 129).

Although the formal structure of these tales is not such that an explicit "moral" is appended, they nevertheless can all be seen to contain an implicit moral (or, more accurately, a set of related morals) which are abundantly clear to their audiences, and can be made clear to the analyst as well. We wish to show here what the study of the Lustful Stepmother motif in its variant expressions in the folklore of northwestern India reveals specifically about the nature of relations within the family and between the sexes in this society and about some underlying assumptions and inherent cultural contradictions pertaining to the nature of human sexuality and its social control.

In order to do this, it is not sufficient to draw only on the synopses of the stories which we have presented here. We must, on the one hand, draw on our knowledge of the social organization and particularly the kinship system of the region of India, and, on the other hand, use the complete texts of the recorded and published versions of these tales which for practical reasons we have not chosen to print in their entirety here. The most useful kind of data for this purpose are the dialogues of the central characters in the seduction scenes and subsequent accusation, punishment, and vindication scenes which proceed in stereotypes fashion in the seven tales. Furthermore, there is the didactic commentary of the narrator (or

"poet," *kavī*) in the *sangs*, and the remarks of minor characters (such as the executioner and the king's minister) advising or reflecting on the events which have occurred. It is a reflection of the common tradition out of which these stories have emerged, some recently, some perhaps centuries ago, that these dialogues and commentaries tend to be phrased in predictable, almost formulaic wording, that identical metaphors are repeated in one story after another, that reference to the better-known stories (particularly *Rup Basant* and *Puran Mal* are made in the course of other stories containing the same motif and that similar references to Indian literary and folk tradition are commonly made where they are deemed appropriate, usually as "examples" of "proofs" (*pramāṇ*) of the wisdom or foolishness of behavior contemplated or committed by the characters in the story at hand.

A central focus in all of these stories is the relationship between stepmother and stepchild. This relationship in India, as in so many other societies, is viewed as inherently imbued with potential conflict. It is felt that a stepmother will fail to take proper care of her husband's children by a previous wife, that if she has children of her own she will favor the latter, and that, in any case, she will try to drive a wedge between her husband and his children by a former wife, complaining to him about their behavior and carrying false reports in order to alienate his affections from them. The stepmother is an object of suspicion and mistrust and is, by definition in this society, the "cruel" or "wicked" stepmother. Thus, according to a local proverb, "Stepmothers are bad even if they are made of dough" (*mossī to cūn kī bī burī*). The Lustful Stepmother motif, as it is treated in these stories, must therefore be considered within the context of the "Cruel Stepmother" motif (Thompson's S31) in Indian folk literature. The former's sexual aggressiveness and later accusations and punitive demands are treated as one variety of the type of cruel behavior to be expected from persons in this kinship role. This point is illustrated, for example, in the opening scene of *Rup Basant*, in which the dying mother begs her husband not to marry again "for the sake of the children." She does not, we may note, indicate in her pleas any desire to insure that her husband be sexually faithful to her. Her motive is rather to ensure that her sons will never have to submit to mistreatment from a stepmother. The same concern is reflected in King Chatur Singh's arrangements for separate living quarters for his second wife when he finally accedes to a remarriage.

That the motif of the Lustful Stepmother is seen in this culture as a variation of the theme of the Cruel Stepmother is also demonstrated in the fact that in several of the *Sang* and *bhajan* texts with which we are dealing, the Puranic story of *Dhruva* is pointedly referred to. The latter story is brought in either as part of a warning to the young man of his stepmother's possible unsavory intentions (for example, in *Puran Bhagat*, by his mother) or in the course of reflections by subsidiary characters, or by the "poet" on the inevitability or predictability of the stepmother's behavior. The *Dhruva* story is a straightforward example of the Cruel Stepmother motif -- a young child is slighted by his father at the instigation of his father's second wife and, as a result, determines to devote himself to a search for God, eventually being elevated to the heavens as the North Star (see Ghosh 1965: 302-307; Coomaraswamy and Nivedita 1967: 378-380). The seduction

motif is entirely absent from the *Dhruva* story, yet this story is viewed as direct parallel of the tales being discussed here.⁵

The role of stepmother can only be fully understood in perspective of the role of mother. An understanding of the concept of motherhood in Indian society (although the mother herself appears only indirectly in most of these tales, and centrally in none of them) is central to the contextual meaning of the Lustful Stepmother motif. The mother in this culture is idealized as a nurturant, succouring figure, an always-dependable source of security and warmth. Self-sacrifice is seen as the essence of the mother's role -- she will give up every pleasure and need of her own in order to ensure the happiness and well-being of her child. The mother is viewed as dispensing freely and openly the purest and most genuine kind of love, and in return the child offers complete devotion and dependency. In the relationship of child to its mother, respect is combined with warmth and intimacy, and there is little of the restraint and distance which characterizes the attitude toward its father. Woman as mother is to be trusted implicitly -- her non-sexual love is, for a man, purer and more worthy even than the similarly self-effacing ideal love of a wife for her husband. This is one aspect of the essentially dualistic conception of woman in this society to which we will refer again later.

In only two of these tales is the protagonist's mother living. In both, she is a model of motherly devotion, sharing in his punishment and exile, cleaving to him (rather than to her husband or other close kin) in his adversity (see *Puran Mal* and *Jaimal Phatta*.) In the other tales the mother is either stated or presumed to be dead, but here the "mother" role nevertheless is central to the dramatic conflict of the story, particularly in the seduction scene and its immediate aftermath. Indeed, the very fact that the protagonist does *not* have a living mother brings the concept of motherhood more sharply into focus as a central issue. The seduction scene, as it is drawn out in the dialogues of the young man and woman, becomes a struggle over the definition of their relationship, and the young woman attempts valiantly to redirect his attention to what she considers to be the more important issue of her desire for him. Consistently the young man tries to define the young woman, whatever her actual relationship to him, as "a kind of mother," while she tries to persuade him that even if she is perhaps superficial and from one point of view "like a mother," in reality their relationship is quite otherwise, and sexual relations between them are quite possible and indeed appropriate. He stubbornly insists upon placing her (or rather, keeping her) in the category of prohibited sexual partner, while she defines herself as imminently eligible.

In Indian society the use of kinship terms in address is felt to have a kind of coercive power or at least a positive influence on behavior, so that, for example, calling a man "brother" may act as a damper to any possibly dishonorable intentions he may have. Furthermore, relationships between persons of the opposite sex who are not in the prohibited kinship categories are felt to be potentially, even inevitably, sexual in nature. Thus it is not surprising that a key device in the young man's rejection of the woman's sexual advances is the use of various kin terms for "mother" and the development of arguments based on the supposed "mother-son" relationship existing

between them. The general thrust of his argument is all of the examples of the motif which we have examined, is that (1) mother-son incest is a heinous sin; (2) we are mother and son to one another; (3) therefore, sexual relations between us are unthinkable.

For example, in one of the printed versions of *Rup Basant*, the young man replies to Sundra's unexpected proposal that he forget his ball game and "play" with her:

"You are my mother -- don't give me bad advice. . . Why are you putting this burden of sins on your head? Being a mother, you think about making love to your own son!

And she replies:

"Don't say mother, mother to me . . . come to your senses and let's discuss this."

Later, in their duet, the following portion of the dialogue is relevant:

- S. "Be my husband -- don't make me your mother . . . mother is only that one who gives birth to a son."
R. "But who is the sister of one's mother [*mausi*, "stepmother, has as its "primary" meaning "mother's sister"] if not a mother?
S. "If I want to have sex with you, then what are you to me?"
R. "But when I call you "stepmother," mother, then what am I to you?

In a similar dialogue in the *sang* version of *Dharm Pal Shanta Kumari*, the young man pleads:

"If you renounce your *dharma*, our *karma* will be ruined. Day will turn into night, oh *mausi*; for three lives we will suffer from this sin.
If you become the victim of lust, oh mother, you destroy *dharma*. Consider yourself my mother! Let me go, I pray you."

An important distinction within the general category of "mother" is made by the young man in several of these texts: that is, between the *pāp kī mā* ("mother by sin") and the *dharma kī mā* ("mother by faith" is any other woman who stands in a status position equivalent to that of mother. The latter term may refer to the stepmother or to someone who takes on a "mothering" role or occupies a "mother-like" status (as, for example, the elder brother's wife in *Devar Dhabhi*.) In traditional Indian literature the guru's wife is sometimes referred to in these same terms. The implication of the contrast is that the *dharma kī mā* is deserving of even greater respect and reverence than the "real" mother because the relationship with her is "pure," not based on the "sin" of sexual intercourse (that is, between her and one's father.) Thus, for example, in the confrontation between Rup and his father after Sundra has made her false accusation, Rup protests

his innocence and makes reference to his deceased mother:

"That mother was the mother by sin, this is my mother by faith. I bow to her with folded hands . . . If I were to pay my respects daily to my *mausi*, I would go to heaven."

Elsewhere, with the same intentions, he maintains: "The rights of a *mausi* are greater even than those of a real mother."

In another example, Dharm Pal (in the *sang* version of this story) resists his stepmother's proposal with the words:

"I am to you a son of faith, and you are my mother. Having seen my good looks, *mausi*, don't do this great wrong . . . [of] having lustful eyes for your very own son."

The *sangs* and *bhajans* whose texts we are examining tend in general to uphold the scriptural norms and values in kinship matters as in other areas. Thus, in the tale which deals with an elder brother's wife and her husband's younger brother (*Devar Bhabhi*), there is no significant difference in the dialogue or commentary from those tales in which the seductive woman is a stepmother. The ideal that the elder brother's wife should be respected as a "pure" woman of the "mother by faith" category is adhered to in this *sang*, even though in fact in this region there is a stereotyped joking relationship between the elder brother's wife and the husband's younger brother. In this relationship, particularly if the brothers are fairly close in age, mutual teaching, joking, and sexual innuendo are permitted and even expected. While actual sexual relations are not considered acceptable, they are probably regarded as less serious than adultery with an unrelated (or otherwise related) woman and do not constitute "incest" as do such relations with a "sister," "daughter" or "mother" (in the extended sense of these terms.) But there is no reference to this relationship of license in the text of *Devar Bhabhi*, and the woman does not use the existence of such a relationship as an argument for the acceptability of her proposition. The dialogue here is very similar to that of the man and woman in the four "stepmother" stories. Thus, for example, Rangbir protests when his *bhabhi* suggests that they make love:

"Why are you committing this heinous act? You and I can never be a couple. There will be a great outcry in the world. . . *Bhabhi* is equivalent to a mother!"

And in their later duet his sister-in-law pleads:

- B. "Please do as I say; fulfill my desire!"
- D. *Bhabhi*, you are like a mother to me. Do not destroy the fortress of our house!"
- B. "You and I are a perfect couple. Do not make me your mother!"
- D. "You should pair yourself with my brother, not with me."

Further along in their dialogue Rangbir tries to reorient his sister-in-law's feelings for him not only by calling her "mother," but by attempting

to elicit "motherly" behavior from her: "Take me on your lap and love me" -- a phrase having all the implications of a mother's non-sexual love for her child.

An interesting solution to the problem of redefining the relationship is sought in the story of *Jaimal Phatta*, where the mother's brother's wife is the hopeful seductress. She does not deny that she stands in a forbidden relationship to Jaimal, but attempts to establish the existence of a prior kinship relationship which should take precedence. She points out that since she and Jaimal's wife are natives of the same village (and are therefore "sisters" to one another), she is in reality Jaimal's "wife's sister" (*sālī*). And the wife's sister is a permitted joking partner -- this relationship is defined in the local culture in very much the same terms as the relationship of a man and his elder brother's wife.

It may be observed here that in almost all of the tales being discussed (and in all of those that are known to be "traditional" rather than recently composed by contemporary *sangis*, the seduction scene occurs at the very first meeting of the couple. Although this fact is never given particular stress by the central characters nor in the commentary, it is striking that as a consequence of it the attempted seduction does not in fact contravene an existing and on-going role relationship between the parties. The woman involved has never really "acted" as the young man's mother. She "is" his mother by definition, but her knowledge that she is propositioning her "son" is an intellectual knowledge, not one born of nurturant interaction with him. Her desire is not "unnatural" or "perverted" in that sense. Her love for him is "love at first sight" (or, in some versions, "love at a distance"); it is in no case a deep and mature attachment growing out of lengthy and close interaction. This manner of staging the attempted seduction may arise out of certain conceptions about the nature of romantic love and sexual desire, but it is also clearly the most obvious device by which the extraordinary situation being portrayed can be made even remotely conceivable to the composer and his local audience. Furthermore, it enables the poet to avoid the vexing question of motivation and psychological character development which would be involved in explaining a genuine role reversal. In the cases in which one must assume some kind of longer-standing relationship to have existed between the man and woman before the attempted seduction (in *Devar Bhabhi* and *Dharm Pal Shanta Kumari*), the problem of the role change is simply ignored by the poet, with no attempt at explanation.

Another matter to be considered is the relationship between the "father-figure" in these stories and his wife: it is in this relationship that the poets and their audiences seek the key to the motivation of the young woman's seduction attempt (her motivation in accusing and punishing the object of her desire is considered obvious: the wrath of a woman scorned.) We will concentrate in this discussion on those examples which involve a lustful *stepmother*, although many of our observations apply to the other tales as well.

In every case, the married pair consists of an "old" (i.e., over fifty) man and much younger woman (in some versions she is as young as twelve years old; in others she is sixteen or eighteen. Except where the seductive woman

is the *bhabhi*, she is the old man's second wife, taken after the death of his first wife or married polygynously. In each case where a stepmother is involved the old man has one or more mature sons (i.e., over twelve years of age) by his first wife. The significance of these facts lies in cultural attitudes toward polygyny and remarriage and toward qualifications for marriage and the criteria of suitability of mates. While traditionally polygyny has been permitted in Indian society, and while it is still generally regarded as a plausible alternative to monogamy (despite national law to the contrary,) the practice of taking two or more wives has never been highly valued or admired, nor has it ever been widespread. Hindu traditional law has specified rather precisely the circumstances under which polygyny is acceptable -- most of these relate to the inability of the first wife to provide a man with offspring, particularly with male heirs. While polygyny appears in Indian myths and legends as a common prerogative of kings (not all of whom indulge in it for purely procreative reasons), it is generally treated (in folklore, and in the traditional literature as well) as evidence of moral weakness on the part of the man involved, and is shown to result in considerable difficulty, unhappiness, and even tragedy for all concerned. Remarriage for a man after his first wife has died is regarded in a similar fashion (although perhaps with somewhat less disapprobation), if he already has living sons. One possible justification for a remarriage in this latter situation would be to have a woman to take care of the children, but this justification runs up against the problem of the inherent cruelty (or at least lack of concern) of a stepmother towards her husband's children. This is not to say that remarriage of widowers is in fact rare in Indian society -- the opposite is perhaps the case -- but it does suggest that the moralist's attitude toward remarriage is one of considerable disapproval. A fundamental basis for this disapproval probably lies in the notion that marriage (and sexual activity in general) should be undertaken mainly for the purpose of procreation: for the provision of male heirs to carry on one's lineage and to make the appropriate ritual offerings after one's death. The pleasure which accompanies the procreative act should not be valued too highly for its own sake; this stricture is of course related to the ascetic view that sexual activity is physically debilitating (for a man) and that over-indulgence retards one's spiritual advancement as well (cf. Carstairs 1967: 156, 159, and *passim*.)

Another factor is the idea of man's four stages of life (the four *roman*), according to which active sexuality and the other activities of a husband and householder are relegated to a limited period, roughly defined as lasting from the time one marries to the time that one becomes a grandfather (by one's son). When the son has demonstrated his reproductive and social maturity, it is time for the father to retire from active family responsibilities and enter the third *roman* in which a contemplative existence should be his goal. A related notion, which comes not only from the scriptures but from the local culture, is that a parent's sexual activity should be finished by the time the son begins his own sexual life -- it is "shameful" for a man with an adult son to show that he still has an interest in sex. Thus in this region it is not uncommon for the parents of a married son to cease cohabiting with one another when their daughter-in-law comes to live in their house. At least, such restraint is admired, if perhaps honored more in the breach than in the observance. Its relevance to our discussion lies in the fact that in all of these stories a

man has embarked upon marriage at an inappropriate time in his life. Thus, for example, in one of the versions of *Rup Basant* the king's adviser cautions him against a remarriage, reminding him of his promise to his deceased wife, and pointing out to him that "you are not of an age to marry . . . don't get trapped by thoughts of women, trapped in the net of love." The remarriage is particularly inappropriate in those cases in which the man has a son who is himself almost ready to enter the life-stage of householder. For this deviation from proper morality, the only explanation is the old man's unwise and shameful attachment to sexual pleasures. This earns him so much disapprobation from the composers of these *sangs* and *bhajans* that one might almost characterise the motif from their standpoint as the theme of the Lustful Father!

The wife, as a consequence of her marriage to an old man, is portrayed somewhat as a victim, rather than as a vamp, at least insofar as her relationship with her husband is concerned. According to the pattern by which marriages in this society are arranged by parents rather than resulting from romantic love between the couple, the girl is reported to have been "given" (or even "sold") --see *Gulab Kaur* to the older man by her father, and her lengthy discourse in the seduction scene, in which she reveals her unhappiness in her marriage, is intended to arouse sympathy -- and desire -- in the young man and to make her a somewhat sympathetic character in the eyes of the audience. However, in this society an audience's reaction to this kind of plea is bound to be ambivalent at best.

The essence of the young woman's marital dissatisfaction is to be found in cultural notions of a "fit" match -- ideas about what is a "good pair" versus an "unmatched pair" in marriage. The plaint of the young woman centers around the idea that a couple joined in marriage should be "suited" to one another: "One should not try to mate a camel to a she-goat," "A mare looks good with the proper rider"; "A heifer has been joined to an elephant." An oft-related phrase in all of these texts has the young woman saying to the young man: "You and I are a perfect pair" or "We are an equal match." This "equality" is put primarily in terms of age, but a more general concept of mutual suitability (and potential sexual compatibility) is also implied.

The young woman, in the seduction scene, repeatedly asks that she not be blamed for this situation, for her parents and her husband have done wrong to think of such a match and to force her to become a party to it. Her problem is explicitly stated to be sexual dissatisfaction -- somewhat ironically, since lust on the part of the old man is asserted to have been the motive for his marriage! For example, Kam Kala cries out to Dharm Pal:

"Your father is old, grey has taken over his hair.
With wrinkles on his cheeks, he is unable to cope with a
youthful woman . . .
The oil is all gone, the lamp is empty, the wick is limp
and weightless."

And later:

"I am dying without a man;
I am thirsty: you be Indra and shower rain on me.
You be the snake charmer and charm me with your love flute;
I am a cart for hire: you be my cart man . . ."

And so on.

In *Rup Basant* a similar dialogue takes place, in which Sundra attempts to excuse her behavior on the basis that the very natural desires of a young woman have been thwarted by marrying her to an old and (by implication) impotent man:

"There is no fault of mine in this; the fault is of the king.
Consider this the mistake of your father;
As if marriage were a game!
My age is twelve years, and he is an old bullock.
Whenever I put it to the test, I passed and he failed.
How can a person live when the relationship is between unequals?"

Later, when she reports to her husband that Rup has assaulted her, she speaks pitifully of her helplessness as a pawn in the game of others:

"I am like the wife of an orphan — I was married to the father
but the son kept me in his house [i.e., had sexual intercourse with her].
May that Brahman die and that Nāi [Barber -- a marriage intermediary] die without a son, to whom the whole world was empty when they betrothed me in this house [i.e., who were unable to find any other husband for her].
My parents have drowned me by marrying me to a previously-married man."

Another factor in the young woman's unhappiness, mentioned in some of the texts, is her childlessness. Her craving for a son of her own provides, to an audience in this society, a readily conceivable motive for her willingness to contravene the strict norms of marital fidelity and the incest taboos. A childless woman is one who has been able neither to fulfill her bodily functions as a woman, nor to assume the ideal womanly role of motherhood. In the dialogue of the seduction scene the young woman in these texts thus makes frequent reference to the fact that she has not yet been able to "blossom," that she has not "borne fruit." These and other metaphors for pregnancy and childbearing are used liberally in her attempts to persuade the young man to live with her. In one text, Kam Kala, expressing her love and desire for Dharm Pal, even says to him, "How I have longed for a son as beautiful as you!" Other characters in the stories also make a source of unhappiness for her. For example, in the accusation scene in one version of *Rup Basant*, her husband remonstrates with Sundra when she accuses Rup of assault:

"My Rup is not like that -- give me a whip -- that woman is talking rubbish.

He is young -- he doesn't know east from west.

Why are you so jealous of these children?

One day you too will blossom."

While the young woman's sexual frustrations and childlessness doubtless arouse a certain amount of sympathy, and while the texts include comments by subsidiary characters and by the poet-narrator to the effect that her behavior is what might be expected from a union between an elderly man and a young woman whose sexual capacities are at their peak, there is no attempt made to *excuse* her behavior nor to exonerate her from wrongdoing. Rather, it is suggested that her behavior is imminently illustrative of "the way women are." The notion that the Lustful Stepmother is in a sense a typical representative of her gender is brought out very clearly in the choice of a title for one of the *sangs* in this collection (a version of the *Rup Basant* story), namely, *sangit Triya Caritra*, "The Story-Song of Woman's Character." Like the Spanish tales of *Women's Wiles* (see Yohannon 1968: 261-263), these stories on the Lustful Stepmother theme reveal a great deal about culturally-shared conceptions of the nature of femininity.

We have suggested above, in our discussion of the concept of "motherhood," that woman is viewed dualistically in Indian society. This dualistic view results from a basic ambivalence toward the female sex -- an ambivalence which Carstairs, for example, seeks to explain in childhood experience (1967: 156-162), but which in the present context we will deal with only on the manifest level, as it is revealed in the texts and recorded performances. One aspect of this conception of womanhood sees her as benevolent, nurturant, "pure," and loving, in the non-sexual sense. This is "woman as mother," the aspect in which woman is idealized and even "worshipped" in Indian social and religious life. But there is another contradictory aspect of woman in which she is viewed as threatening, destructive, and aggressive (specifically sexually aggressive). It is this aspect of woman that is represented by the Lustful Stepmother and that is referred to in the phrase "woman's character."

There are several particular characteristics of woman in this aspect that are referred to in the course of these stories. One of the most important is the characteristic of being untrustworthy, deceitful, and unreliable. In this connection, a well-known local saying is repeated almost formulaically in a number of the texts, namely: "noone can ever understand woman's character: first, she kills her husband and then she commits *sati* [self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband]." The Lustful Stepmother of course demonstrates this characteristic most clearly in the accusation scene, where she carefully sets the stage for her husband's return and then proceeds to convince him of the truth of her highly implausible story. In most of these texts it is said that the woman "does *asanpāṭi*"; in other words, she disarranges her hair and clothes, removes her jewelry, and lies on the floor feigning illness and distress. She dramatically recounts the details of her violation and has her maid recount them for her, neatly reversing the roles of the actual seduction scene:

"The Queen was crying out "Son! Son!" as he dragged her to the floor and said, "Love doesn't know any *mausi* or *betā* ["son"]. Our mother was Rupade -- you are my woman. A mare looks good with the proper rider, and you are suited to me. He dragged her to the bed -- there was a long tussle. . . ."

And then, in her own words:

"He bit me, he ate my flesh;
I cannot even tell you all the bad things he did.
Of course, you will side with him -- who will believe me?"

Another related characteristic of woman in her destructive aspect is her capacity to bring dishonor upon the family, to cause the "line" (*kula*) to be destroyed, to attract the ridicule and contempt of others upon the families of her husband and her father. The instrument of dishonor is understood to be her sexual laxity, and the point is made that the woman driven by desire is not even heedful of the social or kinship status of its object, still less for the consequences of her actions on the prestige and reputation of her family. According to the king's minister in one version of *Rup Basant*:

"When a woman is bent upon sin, she can be the mistress of her own brother or son. She can give birth as a maiden or widow. She won't hesitate to shame the lineage, won't consider who is an outsider, who is lower or higher."

Furthermore, a woman driven by sexual desires is irresistible -- it is in this irresistibility that her danger lies, since it makes the strongest man helpless to defend himself against her onslaught. While men can control their sexual urges, women are insatiable. Yet, once a woman really puts her sights on a man, be he saint or ascetic, young or old, he will be unwittingly drawn into her net and forced to abandon his *dharma*, his religious duty:

"King, there are thousands of old books describing lust, and all agree that 17/20ths of lust belongs to women, 3/20ths to men. This is why you cannot trust her. She has so much power in her body! Immeasurable is the strength of woman."

And in another context, the executioner remarks upon the folly of Puran Mal's father believing his wife's story:

"The following are great evils: water, fire, women, police, prostitutes, and snakes. Those who are trapped by these will not escape."

In sharp contrast to the character of the woman is that of the virtuous young men. The latter's virtue does not lie in his ability to resist temptation -- for there is no suggestion in any of the stories that he is actually tempted by the seductress' offer or that he shares her lustful feelings but is determined to suppress them. His struggle is shown to be against

an external threat (the woman's irresistible power to entrap) rather than against any forces within himself. Armed with his convictions about the morality of kinship, the nature of religious duty and the inevitability of spiritual retribution, he fights to save himself from being overwhelmed by her anti-social intentions. His religious arguments are couched in familiar Hindu terms: *dharma*, *karma*, rebirth, and hell, and he elaborates upon these in multiplicity of permutations. He measures the sinfulness of the act she proposes in terms of the number of miserable future lives in which both of them will experience its consequences. He expounds upon the quantity of bad *karma* to be accumulated through commission of such a moral outrage -- while she counters, "But I assure you there is great pleasure in this *karma*." He tries to frighten her with the knowledge that she will burn forever in hell, and reiterates the firmness of his own resolve to uphold his *dharma* at any price.

"The sun's chariot may turn back, the earth split, the sky fall.
Brahma may be entrapped, but Rup will not renounce his *dharma*;
The Ganges may return to Haridwar,
The whole world may lose its *dharma*,
The gods may take birth,
But I will not sleep on your bed.
Life after life would be blackened by that act.
Think how that could be washed away!"

Further, the young man appeals to the woman's sense of family honor. He stresses that the act she proposes would bring shame and loss of prestige to her husband's family -- to "our family." For example:

"Are you not afraid in your heart of the calamities which
may befall you?
You are suggesting something that will ruin the prestige and
honor of the lineage."

He also appeals to her own sense of shame: "There will be no place for you to show your face; the whole world will laugh." But she retorts: "I don't give a damn for this stupid world!"

It is interesting that there are very few passages in any of these texts in which the young man makes direct reference to his father-figure's prior rights in the sexuality of the woman who is importuning him. We can see in this fact evidence of the marked constraint between father and son (or between a man and his much older brother or his uncle) concerning their respective sex lives. Carstairs has made much of the fact that a son in Indian society is socialized so as to suppress before his father all outward expression of the fact that he leads an adult sexual life -- he enacts before the father, in Carstairs' terms, "a symbolic self-castration" (1967: 159-160). But it may further be noted that a son also properly suppresses any open acknowledgement of the fact that he is aware that his *father* leads an active sexual life. This restraint seems to function not only as a sign of the respect and lack of unwonted familiarity that is supposed to characterize the attitude of a son toward his father, but as a correlate of the "pure," non-sexual, mother. Furthermore, it is clearly an aspect of the notion referred to above, of the propriety of sexual shame between the generations.

In any case, the main point we wish to make here is that, as far as the young man is concerned, it is the incestuous, rather than the *adulterine*, aspects of the proposed dalliance which (manifestly, at least) disturb him. In *Jaimal Phatta* some reference to the uncle's pre-eminent sexual rights over the young woman, his aunt, is made:

"We are like mother and son.

I love my uncle [mother's brother] more than my life.

I cannot be the rider of a mare raised by someone else."

However, this comment is not typical. In most of the texts, if in the seduction scene any explicit mention is made of the father-figure by the young man, it is in terms of the proposed threat to the former's reputation. For example, in *Devar-Bhabhi*, Rangbir says: "On the cost of my brother's honor your dream will not come true." Or, in some instances, he suggests that the woman try to find satisfaction in the arms of her own husband instead of harassing him. But he does not say, in any explicit manner, "I will not sleep with you because I would consider such an act a personal betrayal of my father," nor does he, with the exception of the passage given, refuse on the grounds that to do so "would be to take something belonging to my father."

The young man's virtue in these stories is maintained to the very end -- through the difficult incident of the accusation, through his exile, and even, in those cases where he again confronts the woman who has been his undoing, to the final scene of forgiveness. It is significant that in none of the stories does he show the slightest desire for revenge, and that his defense of his own honor never involves a counter-accusation. His character is consistent: defining the woman as a "mother" he never wavers from behaving toward her as a son ought to behave toward his mother. As he repeatedly resolves to do, he upholds his *dharma* to the end. It is true that in *Rup Basant* the king has his wife hanged when he discovers what she has done, but this act is not performed at Rup's instigation.

We can look at the interaction of the "stepmother" (exemplifying the "character of woman") and the "stepson" (exemplifying the ideal, dutiful son) on another level than that of interpersonal conflict. In a larger sense, these characters and the struggle they engage in are symbolic of forces of more universal relevance. At this level, the Lustful Stepmother tales present to their audiences the essence of the more basic struggle of society over nature, of reason over emotion, of self-control over sensual abandon.⁶ The woman, from this perspective, represents the dangerous forces of personal anarchy, social disorder, and self-indulgence; the man represents the desirable confining and restraining forces which society strives to impose upon man's wants. The woman threatens to unleash the animal nature of her sex -- the man, through steadfast adherence to the commands of moral duty, keeps her in check. The woman is changeable and fickle, shifting ground as her situation alters, adjusting herself opportunistically to the circumstances in which she finds herself. The man, on the other hand, is entirely predictable, forcing circumstance to adapt to the requirements of his principles. The conflict of society against nature is of course present and compelling in all societies, but we would maintain that it has a particularly central place

in the indigenous ethos of northwestern Hindu India (if not in Indian society in general). The interplay of human nature and social order -- envisioned here in terms of the sexual opposition of female and male and the dualism of woman's nature -- has been illustrated through some local interpretations of the Lustful Stepmother motif. But this interplay has other, related manifestations, not only in the realm of folklore, but in the ritual, belief, and value systems of this culture (cf. Vatuk and Vatuk 1967b).

It would be possible -- and enlightening -- to consider a number of other aspects of these Lustful Stepmother stories. For example, an analysis of the role of the wife (in those tales in which the young man is married) could perhaps illuminate further the dualistic view of the feminine character discussed earlier. It is significant perhaps, and certainly of interest, that in none of these stories has the marriage of the young man been consummated. This fact establishes *his* sexual innocence⁷ (and thus perhaps magnifies for him the perceived threat of sexual attack), but it also enables the wife to remain a sexually "pure," succouring, benevolent figure, the devotee of her husband according to the model of Sita and Savitri, while partaking of the ambivalence inherent in the person of the wife as sex partner.

A further direction of inquiry would involve a comparison of the varied forms which this motif takes as it appears in other cultural contexts. A number of points of comparison have suggested themselves to us in the course of this study, in the light of the published exemplars of the Potiphar's wife theme available to us. But an adequate comparative analysis would have to await a more considered study and a fuller body of data from one or more specific cultural contexts. The present study is intended only to show some of the possibilities of this kind of analytic approach for the study of a widespread, almost universal, folklore motif in a particular cultural frame.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of the role of the singing folk preacher (*bhajnopadeshak*) in this region, see Vatuk 1967.
2. The diacritical marks for vowel length and retroflex consonants will be used only at the first occurrence of a proper name or a Hindi word.
3. It is interesting to note the symbolism of the names in this story: Dharm Pal -- Protector of *dharma*, Shanta Kumari -- Peaceful One, Kam Kala -- Lustful One, and Daya Ram -- Compassionate One.
4. See Vatuk and Vatuk 1967 for a description of *sāng*, a type of musical folk drama indigenous to the area of western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.
5. This ethno-classification of the Lustful Stepmother motif as a sub-motif of the Cruel Stepmother illustrates the difficulty of using an *a priori* classification, such as Thompson's motif-index, in cross-cultural folktale analysis.
6. Babb has drawn attention to a similar kind of contrast between the male and female principles in the conceptualization of Hindu deities (1970).
7. This follows since, as a young man devoted to *dharma*, he would not be expected to have contravened the strict norm of premarital celibacy.

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Doranne Jacobson

SONGS OF SOCIAL DISTANCE

*Women's Music in
Central India*

Darkness settles over a small village in the heart of India. Cattle have returned to their sheds and the villagers to their houses. Small puffs of smoke rise from the evening cooking fires and then waft away. A dog yaps sporadically at the scent of a wild pig or leopard in the nearby jungle, but otherwise all is quiet in the village. The work of the day is done.

Then, faintly illuminated by pale moonlight, draped figures emerge in two and threes from dark doorways. Soft speech and the jingle of jewelry announce to neighbors the passing of women and girls through the village lanes. Responding to a general invitation issued earlier in the day, the women meet in a courtyard to celebrate with song the birth of a child to a woman of the family who issued the invitation.

The women and girls sit closely together on the floor, most with faces uncovered, but a few carefully veiled, in the dim light of a small oil lamp. They talk for a few minutes as latecomers arrive and then begin to sing. Twenty voices join together in nasal, monophonic phrases that can be heard throughout the village. After an hour or two of singing, the hostess brings out sweets to distribute to her guests, each of whom ties her share into a corner of her sari. The guests sing one or two more songs and then quietly leave for home.

Women's song fests are a common feature of village life in Central India. In Nīmkherā, a village in the Bhopal region of Madhya Pradesh, in one year women gathered to sing on 165 days. It is considered important for women to celebrate particular events with singing, and virtually all are singing or leave before singing at least six or seven songs may be scolded by others. A woman who fails to attend the song fests of others risks having no one accept an invitation to sing at her house when she wants them to come. Failure even to give or accept singing invitations is the mark of a rare hermit or outcast.

In Nīmkherā, women sing in observance of annual festivals and calendrical rites. For these occasions hymns (*bhajans*) and traditional songs relating myths and stories are sung, either at nighttime gatherings at particular homes or at daytime meetings in the temple or near the shrine of the village's most important goddess, Matabai. Hymns are also sung at the homes of those gone on pilgrimage to the Ganges and other sacred spots; invitations are issued daily by their relatives waiting at home.

Equally important are song fests held to celebrate significant events in the life cycle: births, engagements, weddings, and *garnas* (consummation

ceremonies). On these important occasions, when new kinsmen are acquired, songs reflecting the relationship between kinsmen are sung. Life cycle songs are sung exclusively by women and girls. Of particular interest is the fact that many of these songs are expressive of tension and social distance between a woman and members of her husband's family, between the kin groups linked by the marriage of a couple, and between males and females in general. It is on these songs that this paper focuses.

Music is important to men of this region too, but men's musicales differ from those of women. Formal invitations are not issued, and refreshments are not ordinarily served. Typically, on pleasant nights, or at festivals, men and boys gather on a verandah or in the temple to sing hymns to the accompaniment of a harmonium. During the rainy season, some young men join in a vigorous circle stick dance (*lehngi*), performed to the music of religious and faintly romantic songs. Men do not sing at life cycle ceremonies. A few men of the village know how to play drums (*timki* and *dholak* or *dholki*), which they do occasionally for pleasure. Men and boys of the Sweeper (Metar or Bhanghi) caste are hired by villagers on important occasions to provide exuberant beats on large gong-like drums (*dhaplās*).

Singing is virtually the only musical form enjoyed by the village women. The *dholak* drum played by women in other parts of India is almost never touched by Nimkhera women, and other instruments are used only by men. Decent women of this region rarely dance: a few hurried and unskillful twists are performed solo before a groom and his bride to bless them and a slow walk-through line dance occurs at the time of the Holi festival. Very infrequently, visiting tribal (Daroi Gond) women perform a vigorous circle dance with wooden castanets. Otherwise, all dancing is the province of the Berni, the public dancing girl, and male transvestites who sometimes perform in the village.

All women's songs are orally transmitted. Girls attending song fests learn song from the older women, and the older women learn from each other. The women of one high caste family are said to know more songs than anyone else, but every woman's repertoire includes scores of songs.

Many of the songs heard in Nimkhera seem to be very old, since they include some phrases and vocabulary no one can readily explain, least of all young people. Other songs, particularly hymns, are easily understood by all. Some songs, otherwise clear, include terms not normally used in the speech of this area, suggesting that they may have originated in other geographical regions where these terms are commonly heard.

Modern film tunes are enjoyed when heard on a radio, but they are never sung at women's song fests.²

The Village

The songs discussed in this paper were collected in Nimkhera, a village of 530 people situated in Raisen District, Madhya Pradesh, about forty-five miles east of Bhopal, the state capital. In many respects similar to hundreds of

settlements in Central India, the village is primarily agricultural. Wheat is the staple; rice, gram, pulses, maize, millet, and several other crops are also grown. The village population is approximately eighty per cent Hindu and twenty per cent Muslim. The Hindus include representatives of twenty-one castes, ranging from land-owning high ranking Jijotiya Brahmans and Bagheli Thakurs to landless low ranking weavers (Kolis) and sweepers. The Muslims include a group of well-to-do Pathans and poorer Fakirs, Sheikhs, and recent converts. The data presented here pertain only to the village Hindus. Muslim kinship and marriage -- and songs -- differ significantly from those of the Hindus and cannot be analyzed adequately here.

Kinship and Marriage

In this area, as throughout much of North and Central India, almost every Hindu belongs to a caste (*jāti*), a patrilineal clan (*got* or *gotra*), and a shallow patrilineage (*khāndan* or *kuṭum*). The caste is endogamous, but the clan and the lineage are strictly exogamous. Marriage to any person known to be a consanguineal relative is prohibited. In this region, marriage to a fellow villager is not forbidden, but the vast majority of Hindu marriages are arranged for their children by parents residing in different villages, typically from one to forty miles apart. Except in unusual circumstances, the bride is expected to make her official residence in a joint family with her husband and his parents and other relatives -- usually strangers to her -- in a village which may be many miles distant from her natal home.

Most girls are married before puberty, and virtually all are married before the age of sixteen. Boys normally marry before age twenty-two. The young couple do not usually begin living together until after the *gaunā* ceremony, which takes place about three years after the wedding. After the *gaunā*, the wife begins to spend more and more time in her husband's home, although most village women spend significant amounts of time in both homes until late in life.

As a daughter in the village of her birth, a girl is free to walk about the village with unveiled face, run errands, visit friends, and attend social functions. However, for her, as for other women, modesty in dress and demeanor is highly valued. She does not normally roam about with abandon, associate with boys, or go to the town bazaar on market day, but she has a great deal of freedom and is generally treated with kindness and love by her natal family and fellow villagers.

In her marital home and village, a young woman is treated and behaves quite differently. Not a daughter (*beti*), but a daughter-in-law (*bahū*), she is expected to observe purdah. She veils her face in the presence of older affines and residents of her husband's village and also covers her face before her husband when others are present. She may not move about as she wishes but should remain inside the house and courtyard unless an outing is specifically sanctioned by her mother-in-law. Attendance at song fests at the homes of non-relatives is usually disallowed, although she may join singing groups on some important festivals. Silent in the presence of her

father-in-law and husband's older brothers, she is expected to be respectful and submissive to her husband's mother and elder sisters. The higher her caste and economic status, the longer and more stringently is she expected to observe these rules. Thus restricted in her social contracts, the *bahū* in a joint family usually feels like an outsider in her husband's home for several years. As the years pass, and as her elder affines die, the wife occupies an increasingly dominant position in her husband's home, until finally she becomes the senior woman in the household. Free from the supervision of elders, the older woman has considerable freedom of action and movement.

The ideal is not always followed: a young wife may achieve a position of power over her mother-in-law in her husband's home, and economic necessity may require that a young wife work outside the home and modify her seclusion. A young couple may live in a nuclear family, separate from domineering elders. Even so, the movements and activities of a daughter-in-law are almost always more restricted than those of a daughter.

Virtually every young wife wishes to spend long months in her parents' home, and parents usually desire to have their daughter visit them for lengthy periods. Women often state that they prefer the warmth and freedom of their natal homes to the restrictions and onerous chores they must endure under the watchful eyes of their affines. Love for her mother, brothers, and other natal kin, as well as freedom from purdah, draw a young woman to her natal home, and she welcomes any opportunity to visit. Her parents must bear the expenses of her journey as well as the cost of a gift for their visiting daughter, but they are usually eager to escort her home. She is loved and missed, not only for herself but for the work she performs in the home. Many young women perform economically valuable functions for both their agnatic and affinal kinsmen for many years after marriage (for further details on women's visiting and work patterns, see Jacobson 1970: 1973).

As the years pass, a woman gradually develops deepening ties of affection to the people in her conjugal home -- especially her husband, children, and grandchildren, and ties to her natal kinsmen may gradually weaken. Yet she always retains some identification with the home of her birth.

Tension and Hostility

Most village women seem to consider marriage for themselves and their daughters to be a necessary evil. All women must marry: there is no place in the society for an unwed woman, and all women should have children. Yet marriage necessitates contracting relationships with strangers that are potentially tense, hostile, and even harmful, as well as beneficial. Parents try to find a marital home for their daughter that will provide her with economic security and affection, but they may fail. Even in the best of circumstances, the desires of a woman and her natal kinsmen do not always coincide with those of her affines. Some degree of tension and dissatisfaction is inherent in the marriage bond linking two individuals and two kin groups.

First is the tension that results from the sudden imposition of the role of daughter-in-law on a young bride. Many brides resent purdah restrictions and the submissiveness expected of them. Few women in this area, even young brides, are willing actually to be subservient to anyone, and some *bahus* find it impossible to even pretend to be so. Disputes between a woman and her mother-in-law are common. A woman may have a warm relationship with her husband's sisters, particularly if they are younger than herself, but older sisters-in-law may resent the intrusion of a stranger into their natal home, and tension often exists between them. Women married to brothers, living in the same house, ideally treat each other with the love of sisters, but jealousy and fights occur all too frequently. In her struggles for power with these women, the young wife usually sees her husband as her ally, although his position is difficult, and he may sometimes side with his kinsmen against her.

Secondly, the relationship between a woman's natal and conjugal kin is one of potential hostility. Both groups of kinsmen feel they have rights in the woman, rights to her company and to her labors, although it is recognized that her children will belong to her husband's agnatic group, and they have not "sold" their daughter to her husband's family, and they still want her at home when she is needed for work or to celebrate a festival or ceremony. But some affines are resentful of a woman's ties to her natal kinsmen and even threaten to abandon the wife if she is not sent immediately upon demand. Persuasion and subterfuge are typically used by both parties to hold a woman for a few more days or weeks. In-laws who refuse to allow a woman appropriate visits to her natal home arouse much antagonism, as do parents who keep a daughter from her husband's family too long. Bhopal newspapers sometimes report violence resulting from such disputes over women. Most kin groups, however, go to great lengths to avoid the open expression of hostile feelings, and relationships of polite formality are usual.

The potential tension between affines is recognized and dealt with ritually as well as objectively, through distance mechanisms of avoidance, respect, and joking behavior.

Hindu face-veiling within the household, exhibition of submissiveness by a new daughter-in-law, and public avoidance relationships between spouses ideally contribute to maintenance of apparent harmony within the joint family (Madan 1965, Opler 1960, Luschinsky 1962, Jacobson 1970).

When a Hindu woman's natal and affinal relatives meet, as at weddings and *gaurān*, their interaction is governed by formal rules of respect behavior. The men are scrupulously polite to each other. The women veil from and avoid speaking with the visiting men. The two groups of women may never meet at all: women do not accompany the groom's party when he goes to wed and claim his bride, and other rules of etiquette discourage their meeting. The two in most direct competition for a woman's affections and services -- her mother and her husband -- should not even be within sight of each other (although this rule is sometimes relaxed when individuals demonstrate conspicuous ability to accommodate to each other's wishes). Strictly regulated interaction seems to prevent or reduce open expression of hostility between

groups of kinsmen who must associate with each other and do have important common interests (Radcliffe-Brown 1952: 92). However, feelings of hostility and anger are given an acceptable outlet: a bride's natal kinswomen are expected to direct raucously insulting songs and slapstick jokes at a groom's kinsmen during a wedding or *gauna*, and a groom's kinswomen do the same for the bride's womenfolk, these insulting songs may be seen as a shorthand expression of the resentment of the natal kin group at losing full control of its daughter, and advance payment for the unhappiness the new bride will suffer in her new home among these strangers -- in coin the bride herself cannot give. When sung by the groom's womenfolk, the songs may be said to express sarcastic thanks for the gift of a bride who will end up controlling the house she now enters so apparently meekly. For both, the ritual insults acknowledge that disputes will certainly arise between them in the future. Additionally, the humor of the songs and jokes breaks the ice between groups of strangers or relative strangers who, despite tension, will have to deal with each other for a lifetime. Yet, although members of the two groups may cooperate in the future, from the point of view of the married couple linking them, the two kin groups will always be separate -- for a woman, the people of her natal home (*maikewale*), and the people of her husband's home (*susralwale*). This basic distinction can never be erased.

Wedding and Gauna Songs

Dressed in his wedding finery, his arrival signalled by drums and firecrackers, the groom arrives at the house of his bride. He and his party of male escorts are greeted by a barrage of insulting songs sung by the women of the bride's kin group and village. A few years later, at his *gauna*, when he comes to escort his bride to her new home, he and his menfolk again hear gross songs directed at them. No wedding or *gauna* can be considered complete without these traditional insults, *gari git*, or the fun-filled send-off given the visitors. The groom's men (the groom himself is exempt) must sit in a row, while from behind, the veiled women of the bride's family douse them mercilessly with pots of red and purple dye, tie cowbells around their necks, and sing more *gari git*. The laughing men must depart without retaliating.

Gari songs usually have sexual themes, and frequently imply that the women of the groom's family are of loose character. The following song was sung at a Thakur youth's *gauna* for the benefit of the bride's menfolk. The main characters in the song are:

From Khetpur, Narayan Singh's wife, the bride's mother.

From Nimkhera, Ram Singh, the groom's father.

Harlal Singh, Tej Singh, Lachman Singh, the groom's paternal uncles (Ram Singh's brothers).

Thakur Gawnā Gārī Git

Where is the prostitute from? Where are the bamboos planted?
The prostitute is from Khetpur. The bamboos are planted in Nimkhera.

The bamboos were planted by men. The bamboos were climbed by a
woman, jingle jangle.³
That brazen harlot has climbed, jingle jangle.

Ram Singh planted a bamboo, my dear,
Harlal Singh planted a bamboo, my dear.

Narayan Singh's wife climbed on them, her breasts bobbing, bobbing.

Come down, come down, shameless harlot.
Your husband is dying of shame, my dear.

Harlot, why are you shaming him so, jingle jangle?

She urinated from there
Your husband's brothers are mortified, wench.

But why should they be shamed?
The shame is yours strumpet, jingle jangle.

Ram Singh gave her a sari, Harlal Singh gave her a sari.
The prostitute got down and came home.

Tej Singh gave her a mirror, Lachman Singh gave her a mirror.
The harlot quickly came home.

In this song the shameless behavior of the bride's mother is accentuated by likening her actions to those of a common prostitute. Not until she received payment for her services does she go home. But not even a harlot would urinate openly before spectators. Clearly, the morals and pedigree of the bride's family are being insulted here, and yet, even in this song, the fact that the woman is not really an integral part of her husband's family is indicated ("The shame is yours. . . .") Although her affines are embarrassed, the woman still remains separate from them.

The following song was recorded at a *gawnā* in the high-ranking Raoji caste. Again, the song is directed at the bride's kinsmen. In addition to impugning the morals of the bride's mother, the song implies that the bride's menfolk are impotent. The main characters are:

From Bargaon: Shubhlal's wife, the bride's mother.

From Nimkhera: The Baba, who may be a holy man or a married temple priest.

Raoji Gaunā Gari Git

Here's a *khakariā* tree, here's a *daretiā* tree;

Shubhlal's wife met a Baba in between these trees,
met him there, met him there.

The Baba asked, "Oh my disciple, under your face veil, what is there?"

"Eyes are there, a legion is there, if anyone wants to use them,
they are ready, they are ready."

The Baba asked, "Oh my disciple, under your eyes, what is there?"

"Cheeks are there, soft cheeks are there, if anyone wants to bite them,
they are ready, they are ready."

The Baba asked, "Oh my disciple, inside your blouse, what is there?"

"Lemons are there, oranges are there if anyone wants to pluck them,
they are ready, they are ready."

The Baba asked, "Oh my disciple, under your breasts, what is there?"

"There's a navel, there's a belly-button, if anyone wants to plant
anything, it is ready, it is ready."

"If you're from Nimkhera, you will break it, but if you're from
Bargaon, you'll never make it."

The Baba asked, "Oh my disciple, under your sari, under your shirt,
what is there?"

"Hay is there, grass is there, if anyone wants to cut it,
it is ready, it is ready."

It was sold for a fortune, there are babies in it, it cost a fortune."

The disciple asked, "Oh my Baba, inside your underwear, what is there?"

The Baba answered, "A curly thing, a standing thing,
so erect it could support a broken building."

The following two songs were sung at a Khawas (barber) wedding, by the
bride's womenfolk, purportedly depicting the depraved morals of the groom's
mother. The characters are:

Gyan Singh's wife, the groom's mother.

Rup Singh, the bride's father. He is also addressed as "Shyam" -- Romeo.

"In the first song, the bride's mother has gone to the well for water.

Khawas Wedding Gārī Gīt

My house is far, my pots are heavy,
Please help me a little,
Shyam, please carry my pots.

If I carry your pots, what will you give me, fair one?
Open your skirt and show me.

I'm embarrassed to open my skirt,
but come into a narrow alley.
Shyam, please carry my pots.

Gyan Singh's wife says to Rup Singh,
Shyam, please carry my pots.
Ram Singh says, if I carry your pots, what will you give me?

To Gyan Singh's fair one, Rup Singh says,
Open your sari and show me.
Come into a narrow alley, Gyan Singh's wife says again.
I'm embarrassed to open my sari,
Come inside the house
Shyam, please carry my pots.

The second song indicates further licentiousness -- the villagers consider dancing naked to be the utmost in debased behavior. Even prostitutes dance modestly clothed.

Khawas Wedding Gārī Gīt

A gardener woman came from a flower garden,
She brought a fragrant garland;
Two oranges, two pomegranates. 4

The lovers sat together and thought,
One garland for both Gyan Singh and his wife.
She got ready to dance naked.

She wore a full wide-whirling skirt and a glittering sari,
Now she was ready to dance naked.

She had parted her hair and put a shining spangle on her forehead.
She wore a velvet blouse tied with a glittering string;
Two oranges, two pomegranates.

The lovers sat together and thought.
Gyan Singh's wife got ready to leave him to go to Rup Singh.
She was ready to dance naked;
Two oranges, two pomegranates.

Other *gārī* songs include obscene references to sexual acts and body parts. In one song the groom's father is depicted as struggling ridiculously to get a biting rat out of his *dhoti*, and in another, one of the groom's relatives has a dog's penis on his head.

Birth Songs

The birth of a child, boy or girl, is celebrated by a song fest for village women and girls on the night following the birth and by a gathering ten nights later, after the *Chauk*, an infant blessing ceremony. At both events, songs of the same type are sung. Most refer to the new mother (*jachohā*), the pain she has suffered, and her relationships with those around her. None of the songs dwell on the child, nor is he seen by the guests, presumably to avoid attracting the evil eye. The new mother also refrains from appearing.

In this area nearly all children are born in their father's house. Young women say they would feel too shy to give birth in their natal homes, and giving birth to a first child in the woman's parental home is thought to bring tragedy. In this, as in other ways, the natal and conjugal spheres are kept separate -- a child is clearly the product of conjugal relations. Thus isolated from her natal kinsmen, the young woman in childbirth feels acutely the social distance between herself and the women around her. Some of these feelings find expression in the childbirth songs sung for her by the village women, most of whom have been through the experience. For the young girls who join in, the songs help to prepare them for their future roles as wives and mothers.

In the following song, heard at a Brahman *Chauk* ceremony, "Raja" refers to the woman's husband

Brahman Chauk Song

Listen, my Raja, my mother-in-law is sleeping upstairs,
Wake her up and bring her.

Listen, oh mother, your daughter-in-law's waist is narrow,
Come and share her pain.

Listen, dear son, that deceitful woman has a very sharp tongue.

Listen, oh mother, the woman is an outsider,
If not for her, then do it for me

Listen, my Raja, elder sister-in-law⁵ is sleeping upstairs,
Wake her up and bring her. . . .

Listen, my Raja, your auntie⁶ is sleeping upstairs. . . .

Listen, my Raja, your sister is sleeping upstairs. . . .

In this song, the husband's women relatives refuse to assist the pregnant woman through her childbirth, holding against her the sharp words she has spoken to them. The husband is seen as the only member of the household sympathetic to her needs.

The following song was sung to celebrate the birth of a Thakur baby. The tonic referred to is a potion of several herbs and spices prepared specially for a new mother to give her strength. Here, the efforts of the new mother to generously distribute riches in celebration of the birth are thwarted by her husband's scheming mother and sister.

Thakur Birth Song

I would have taken a penny and bought a coconut for my tonic,
But my mother-in-law and sister-in-law drank the tonic and left
the pot empty.

Today I would have showered pearls throughout my beloved's kingdom,
I would have taken a penny to the goldsmith and had him make jewelry,
But my mother-in-law and sister-in-law put on all the jewelry and left
the box empty.

Otherwise, today I would have showered diamonds and pearls throughout
my beloved's kingdom.

I would have taken a penny to the bazaar and bought a sari,
But my mother-in-law and sister-in-law put on all the clothes and
left the box empty.

Today I would have showered pearls throughout my beloved's kingdom,
But my mother-in-law and sister-in-law put on all the clothes and
left the box empty.⁸

In the following song, the new mother is more clever than the women of her husband's family: she pretends her husband has gone away with the key to their trunk and thus she cannot get at the money to pay the women for the ritual services they perform for her. But the question, "How did she bathe?" suggests that she is lying. Before a new mother appears after a birth, she must bathe and don fresh clothing -- clothing which she must have taken out of her trunk. The song was heard at a Thakur Chauk celebration.

Thakur Chauk Song

The new mother came out, with her dear baby in her arms.
See, she stood in the courtyard; how did she bathe?

Her mother-in-law made the tonic and asked for her money.⁹
Instead of giving the money, the new mother said,
"My husband has gone far away,
He took the trunk key with him." How did she bathe?

Her elder sister-in-law¹⁰ prepared sweets¹¹ and asked for her money.
Instead of giving the money, the new mother said,
"My husband has gone far away,
He took the trunk key with him." How did she bathe?

Her younger sister-in-law¹² heated the meal and asked for her
money. . . .

Her husband's sister made auspicious designs¹³ and asked for her
money. . . .

A Goreyya Song

The final song presented here was not sung on the occasion of a birth, but at a Goreyya, a women's fun fest enacted in conjunction with a wedding. The Goreyya is held by women of the groom's family and village left behind when the groom's party goes to take part in the wedding festivities in the bride's village -- usually at midnight or later -- the groom's womenfolk enact a profane parody of the wedding and of other activities. Gross and obscene skits are performed, not only at the expense of the bride's kinsmen, but at the expense of local males as well. For this reason, men and boys of all ages are rigorously excluded from watching the Goreyya on pain of being beaten by the women. In one Goreyya skit, held during a low-caste Sority wedding, a woman pretended to be a vendor, carrying a basket on her head. Another woman acted the role of buyer.

Seller: "Penises for sale, penises for sale."

Buyer: "Whose have you got?"

Seller: "Ram Singh Patel's" [an eminent Thakur of Nimkhera].

Buyer, looking in basket, angrily: "Oh no, this is all shriveled
and dried out."

The act continued through a rejection of the penises of ten different men, for various defects. The women seemed to be expressing rather clearly their anger at being excluded from the wedding itself, and anger at men in general.

After several more raucous skits, the Goreyya calmed down enough to include this rather poignant song. Here a woman sadly expresses her feelings of loneliness in her new home, at the same time reaching out to her baby son, the member of her husband's family with whom she will have the closest ties of affection. The words of the song suggest too that she is treasured by her husband. The difficulty of her painful separation from the home of her childhood will be eased by the growth of these new bonds of love.

Goreyya Lullaby

For this baby I have left my mother's home,
Don't cry, beloved woman's child,
Don't cry, beloved woman's child.

For this baby, I have left my family,
Don't cry, beloved woman's child,
Don't cry, beloved woman's child.

For this baby, I have left my friends,
Don't cry, beloved woman's child,
Don't cry, beloved woman's child.

For this baby, I have left sitting and visiting in the village.
Don't cry, beloved woman's child.
Don't cry, beloved woman's child.

NOTES

1. The data on which this paper is based were collected by the author during approximately two years of anthropological fieldwork in "Nimkhera" from 1965 to 1967, and a month in 1973, with assistance of Kumari Sunalini Nayudu. I am very grateful to the residents of Nimkhera for their hospitality and cooperation and Miss Nayudu for her valuable insights and aid. Miss Nayudu accompanied me to scores of women's song fests, transcribed numerous songs, and provided preliminary translations. I am indebted to many state and district government officers in Bhopal and Raisen for the many courtesies they extended, and to my husband, Jerome Jacobson, for essential assistance.

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The pseudonym "Nimkhera" refers to a large *nim* tree in the center of the village, whose leaves are used by all the villagers for soothing medications.

The language spoken in Nimkhera is a variety of Hindi. In this paper Hindi words are written with diacritics only at the first appearance of each word.

2. In a large computerized study embracing data from all over the world, Alan Lomax and others have correlated various styles of folk music and dance with various social relationships, particularly male-female relationships. The analysis, for example, associates pinched and nasal singing with social and sexual repression of women, as seen in the Near East. Vocal tension is found to be high in societies where men perform all or most of the main subsistence tasks. Relaxed vocalizing is associated with important female roles in basic subsistence endeavors, and polyphony with the recognized importance of female cultural roles (Lomax 1968: 168, 193-200).

Women singing in the Bhopal region is monophonic and nasal, but not nearly so nasal as that of the Near East. The high tense tones so characteristic of Indian film songs are absent. Village women in this region are expected to observe strict codes of modesty and chastity, but lapses are common and, if not too publicly obvious, tacitly accepted. The possibility of illicit relationships is clearly referred to in women's wedding songs. Women perform essential tasks connected with the reaping and preparation of foods for consumption, but they do not drive plows -- the single most important subsistence task in this agricultural society. Women's roles are primarily complementary to those of men, and their importance is partially recognized secularly and ritually. Nevertheless, both men and women share the ideology that men should be dominant over women, and most women suffer subordination to males in at least some respects.

In contrast, in Bastar District, Madhya Pradesh, young men and women of the Muria tribe join together in song and dance fests. Tones are less nasal, and singing while monophonic, is characterized by phrases sung alternately by members of each sex. Sexual repression is virtually absent, and women play vital roles in subsistence. Muria male-female relationships are more nearly equal than those of villagers in the Bhopal region.

3. "jingle jangle" (*raṅ jhuniyā*) represents the sound of the woman's jewelry as she moves. In normal circumstances the jingle of silver jewelry is considered a pleasant sign of femininity but here it suggests the woman has dressed herself gaudily for the benefit of her lovers.

4. "Two oranges, two pomegranates" (*do naraṅgī, do anār*) appears in several *gānī* songs and refers to breasts.

5. "Elder sister-in-law" (*jethānī*) = husband's elder brother's wife.

6. "Auntie" (*chāchījī*) = husband's father's younger brother's wife.

7. "Sister-in-law" (*nanāndiyā, or nand*) = husband's sister.

8. This is an example of a song which may be quite old. The "penny" here is a *damrī* (one-eighth of a pice), a coin not in current use. The nonsequitur in the last lines may be a result of years of oral transmission.

9. She asked for *nek*, a small amount of money given in return for the performance of ritual services.

10. Elder sister-in-law" (*jethānījī*) = husband's elder brother's wife.

11. "Sweets" (*laruā*, also known as *ladḍūs*) are expensive ball-shaped sweets specially made and distributed among relatives to announce a birth. Herbal *ladḍūs* are also made for the new mother to give her strength.

12. "Younger sister-in-law" (*devrānī*) = husband's younger brother's wife.

13. "Auspicious designs" (*satiye*) are designs sculptured in cowdung near the doorway of a new baby's father's house by the baby's father's sister or father's brother's wife. The designs are worshipped by the baby's mother at the Chauk infant blessing ceremony.

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Edward O. Henry

NORTH INDIAN WEDDING SONGS

*An analysis of
functions and
meanings*

The wedding is the paramount social event for the Hindu family in Northern India. It involves a series of rites beginning one to two months before the climatic rite, the *vivāh*, and ending with the *gaurā*, the removal of the bride to the home of the groom, which may follow the *vivāh* immediately or from one to five years later. Women's songs are integral parts of each of the rites.

In this article I show:

- (1) The kinds of concepts, values and attitudes which are transmitted by women's wedding songs.
- (2) How these songs reflect and reinforce certain structural features of the society.
- (3) How the performance of certain songs contributes to the maintenance of affinal and other relations.
- (4) How songs inform actors' experiences of the rituals and orient people to the new roles and relations effected by the wedding.

This article has been adapted from my Ph.D. dissertation, "The Meanings of Music in a North Indian Village" (Henry 1973). The research was carried out in a village near Naransai in eastern Uttar Pradesh from April 1971 to May 1972.¹ The village is here referred to as Indrapur, a pseudonym.

Marriage and kinship in North India have been discussed in several anthropological accounts, e.g., Karve (1965) and Lewis (1958) and a detailed description of marriage rites in eastern Uttar Pradesh is contained in Planalp (1956). Accordingly, in the following paragraphs I will outline only the salient features of these institutional complexes needed to provide a basis for the interpretation of the wedding rites and songs. This will be followed by a typology of music used in the rites. The texts of collected wedding songs will then be presented in conjunction with brief descriptions of the rituals with which they occur. Following a brief description of song performances and the relationship between song repertoire and social structure, I will discuss major song themes and the functions of song performance.

General characteristics of kinship and marriage.

Much of Indian social behavior can be explained with reference to the operation of a "hierarchic principle" (Dumont 1970) which is manifest not only in the ranking of castes according to beliefs of purity and pollution about their traditional occupations and the ritual ranking of clans within the castes, but also encompasses marriage and kinship institutions as well. It is seen in the superordination of males to females (in contexts of kinship

and marriage), bride-receivers to bride-donors, senior to junior generations, and seniors to juniors within generations. One of the principal themes of this section is how the women's songs simultaneously reflect and reinforce hierarchic themes found in affinal relations, and in life within the extended family. The following sketch of the structure of kinship and marriage will serve as a basis for this discussion. This is an "ideal" model, based on practices and attitudes found most commonly among a majority of castes in the northern zone.²

The basic social unit in the village, the extended family, consists of a group of agnates, their wives, children, and often other relatives, usually unmarried or widowed. Descent and inheritance are patrilineal. Fission of extended families is not uncommon, but when it occurs, land generally remains undivided until the death of the father and separated families reside in adjoining or nearby dwellings. Authority patterns among male agnates are correlated first with generation, i.e., sons defer to their fathers and agnates or other kindred of his generation. Within one generation authority is a matter of relative age, e.g., younger brothers must defer to their older brothers and older cousins related through the male's line.

Marriage is endogamous within the caste and exogamous to the clan. A girl's husband should be of a clan of higher ritual ranking and of a family which is slightly wealthier than her own. A substantial dowry commensurate with the economic status of the families is paid to the husband's family. A man is generally two or three years older than his wife, whose age can vary from pre-pubescent to early twenties, depending upon caste practices and economic status. (Wealthier girls may be sent to high school or college, in which cases marriage or subsequent cohabitation is delayed. Residence after marriage is patrilocal, often with cohabitation delayed three or five years. A distance of ten or more miles usually separates the two families and effectively prevents casual contacts between their members.

Marriage therefore involves the introduction of a young, alien female of a subordinate family into a superordinate household of strangers. Her roles in all but one relationship in the family are deferential. In the company of her husband's father, father's brothers and father's brothers' sons she must speak only when spoken to and keep her sari, which is worn in such a way that the end covers her head, pulled well down over her face. She should speak to her husband only in private. She is not allowed out of the house and inner courtyard in daylight hours. She must defer to the older women of the household, follow their commands, and perform personal services for them. Soon after her arrival she will be expected to perform a large share of the household tasks. Only with her husband's younger brother does she have an informal, symmetrical relationship.

There is often enmity between a woman and her husband's sisters. Her husband's sisters are critical of the behavior of the affinal newcomer (Karve 1965: 137) and may foist their work on her.

There is extreme psychological pressure on a wife to produce a son. His birth perpetuates the agnatic line and he performs essential rites at the death of his father. A woman's status in her conjugal home remains

low until she gives birth to a son. Failure to do so traditionally resulted in a man's taking a co-wife, but this is infrequent today. The birth of a daughter is not joyously celebrated. Daughters always leave their natal homes; their dowry is a burden to their families. They are treated with affection but this is tempered with the idea that the daughter is an impermanent member of the family.

Enmity also exists between a wife and her husband's mother. The mother has nearly unlimited authority to exact services from the new bride. (The over-bearing mother-in-law is a theme in many women's songs). But after a wife bears sons and matures, she increasingly assumes not only the mother's authority in the household, but some of the mother's affection and support roles towards her (the young wife's) husband.

A young girl's status in her conjugal family contrasts with her status in her natal family. In her natal home she has freedom of movement in the village and, if there are brothers' wives in the family, fewer chores. After marriage, in addition to assuming a lower status and heavier work load, she is expected to shift her loyalty to her husband's family and to accept the companionship of the women in the new house. The distance separating the two households and the bride's young age facilitate her socialization in her new family. Several four to six-month visits in her natal home during the first years of marriage serve to ease the adjustment. Divorce is very infrequent among all but untouchable castes.

Marriage also creates an important relationship between two families. This relationship is asymmetrical: members of the bride's family must play the role of giver and ritual subordinate and the groom's family that of receiver and superordinate. For example, when a man visits his wife's natal home (usually only to return with her to his home), her father must present him with cash, jewelry or clothing, and the best of hospitality. A woman's father avoids her husband's village if possible, but if it is necessary that he go there he must take gifts for her husband and will not accept hospitality of any sort from his family. But the bond between the two families augments the prestige of both and serves as the medium of reciprocal loans.

The difficulties which arise as a result of a woman's changing family membership, the nature of the relationship between affinally related families, and the marriage ceremony itself constitute important themes in women's songs.

Typology of wedding music.

Women's songs are only one division of the total body of wedding music. In the following typology, all types of wedding music are correlated with the rites they accompany. Informants do not conceptualize the music of the wedding in the systematized fashion, but the scheme is largely reflected in the indigenous terminology of local music.

1. Women's songs. The women of the nuptial families sing at the wedding rites which occur at their own homes. It is also customary for the women of the bridal *purohit's* family to sing in the

weddings which he performs, if their home is not too distant. Women's wedding songs can be subdivided into: (a) songs which are sung only at the specific rite, e.g., the songs of *haldī* and *vivāh*; (b) *sāgun*, which are sung for recreation in the evenings prior to the *vivāh*; *sāgun* are also sung in the rites, ideally after such songs sung only in connection with that rite; (c) *gālī*, which are generally obscene insult songs sung in the *vivāh* and other rites in and outside the wedding.

2. Entertainment. There are several kinds of music which may be used to entertain the wedding guests, e.g. *kavālī* and *birhā*.
3. *Agrezi baid* ('English band'). A band leads the *bārāt* ('the groom's party') to the home of the bride and sometimes entertains there, often accompanying performances by a female-impersonating dancer.

Daphalā. This is a band composed of from three to five persons of the Camar or other lower caste playing a large, shallow frame drum (*daphalā*) and other percussion instruments. It is used to lead women's processions in pre-*vivāh* rites and in place of English bands by poorer families.

Wedding songs in their ritual contexts.

The wedding is the paramount social event of the Hindu family. Not only does it mark the establishment of useful and important relations between the two families, but it is a prime occasion for the assertion of the prestige of both families by means of the opportunities for display of wealth it provides, e.g., the quality of food served, band and entertainment hired, and accommodations provided. The wedding also provides the occasions for payments to *parjuniā* ('clients') which constitute an expected part of their income from *jajmans* ('patrons').³

The series of wedding rites constitutes the most comprehensive occurrence of symbolic activity in the rural scene. Wedding songs are one division of this symbolic activity. In order to examine the social and cultural implications of the wedding songs, the relationship between the songs and their social and ritual contexts must be shown. The relationship in some cases is rather general, but in many of the rites it is specific. Song texts are therefore integrated, in the following paragraphs, with brief descriptions of the salient aspects of the rites in process as the songs are sung. (The rites and phases within the rites are presented in the order in which they occurred in Indrapur.) A discussion of social and cultural themes demonstrated by the songs and their singing follows the presentation of songs and ritual.

Preliminary rites and tilak.

It is the sacred duty of a Hindu father to arrange for the marriage of his daughters. With the help of kinsmen in his *birādari* ('the body of caste-members within an area who through a caste assembly or informal organization

constrain the behavior of members'), he must first locate a young man of suitable education and financial prospects. A "good personality" is also important. His family should be of slightly higher ritual and economic standing than the family of the girl. The potential groom's family is approached and if they find the bride's family satisfactory and the amount of the dowry offered acceptable, the *purohīts* ('family priests') then set an auspicious date for the marriage.

After these preliminaries a number of rites are held in the homes of the bride and groom. The first of these is *tilak* ('dowry'). This is also the first of the wedding rites which includes music. The bride's father goes to the home of the groom with a party consisting of selected *birādārī* and his barber. They must be accorded the best hospitality the groom's father can muster including sweetmeats, tea, pan cigarettes, and *bhang*⁴ if desired. The groom's *purohit* performs a ritual in which the dowry payment is made and composes the *lāganpatrikā* ('the marriage-contract document stating the names of the bride and groom and their fathers, and when and where the wedding is to take place'). The bride's father must give the groom and his brothers small amounts of cash, and the groom's father a *janeu* ('loop of string worn to symbolize twice-born status'). The groom's father gives the bride's father cash for the compensation of the accompanying *parjuniā*. The men also negotiate expenditures for band and entertainment and articles of jewelry which the groom's family will give the bride.

At the end of the meal served to the bride's father and party, the women of the groom's family, concealed behind a *pardā* ('curtain'), sing the songs called *gālī*. *Gālī* generally means either verbal abuse or a song of abuse, but some of the songs called *gālī* are not abusive -- they are given that name because the social context in which they are sung is, by the usual metonymic practice,⁵ called *gālī*. *Gālī*, which are found at many of those points in the wedding where men from outside and women of the family are participants, will be discussed at the end of this sub-section.

Reactions of the men to the abuse songs are generally good-natured. A member of the *barāt* wittier than the rest may attempt a humorous retort to the hidden women. Here are four songs recorded at a post-*tilak gālī* session:

Tilak

Arise, citizens of India, arise!
Touch the feet of Gandhi!
How long will you sleep, how long will you sleep?
From now on be attentive.
What of the thread of the spinning wheel, what of the thread of the
spinning wheel,
Concentrate on the homespun cotton,
Leave the study of English, leave the study of English,
Concentrate on Hindi,
Munificent Siv Sankar, munificent Siv Sankar

The trident installed in his hand
 In his hand the beautifully adorned *damarū*,⁶ in his hand the beautifully
 adorned *damarū*
 His forehead invested with the sandalwood paste
 He eats little balls of *bhāṅg*, he eats little balls of *bhāṅg*
 He sits on the back of the ox
 Around his throat a necklace of skulls, around his throat a
 necklace of skulls,
 The trident installed in his hand.

Commentary: This song was clearly a *bhajan* adapted to accommodate Gandhi as a new deity. It is an example of the similarity in cognitive status given to both royalty and divinity which makes possible the more general substitution of nationalism for religion. The spinning wheel symbolizes the anti-British "non-cooperation" movement. In the years of the 1920s Gandhi indicted the British for extracting raw cotton at cheap rates from India and selling British-made cloth back to India at a high profit. Gandhi promoted the use of the spinning wheel and the establishment of cooperatives, where homespun cotton thread could be exchanged for cloth and garments manufactured from homespun thread. Such cooperatives, called Gandhi Ashrams, are in operation today.

Time after time I forbade you, Ram Dharah Singh
 I kept forbidding you not to buy the red *jhinavā* [A translucent material];
 She wears *jhinavā*, that whore Murat's sister,
 Her pubic hair shows through.

Commentary: The name in the first line is that of a member of the bride's family. The name in the third line is that of a member of the groom's father's party. In repetitions of the song the names of other men of the appropriate families are substituted.

The green *nīnā*⁷ planted on the bank of the river are colorful,
 The sister of Sacata has to go on her *gaunā*⁸ and there is no one
 to take her:
 A libertine like our Ram Nath came to take her;
 Standing on a fine cot she begs him to kiss her and ram it in
 hard.

Commentary: This song is typical of the abusive *gālī*. On this particular occasion about half of the *gālī* sung were abusive. The names are introduced as in the previous song.

When I learned before, when I learned before
 I made very fine food, sir;
 When Krishna Kanhaiya, when Krishna Kanhaiya
 I kept fanning him with a wonderful;
 When I learned before, sir, when I learned before
 I kept the water vessel full.

Commentary: This song enumerates customary forms of hospitality, perhaps to remind the guests that they were receiving the kind of hospitality accorded to the most royal of guests.

Urdī Chūnā

The next rite in the series is observed at both the bride's and the groom's homes on dates fixed by their *purohīts*. At each home five *sādhavā* women (women whose husbands are alive) gather to sing for the first time, in connection with that particular wedding, the songs called *sāgun*. As they sing they winnow some *urdī* ('horse bean' -- *vicia fabia*; *chūnā* -- 'to jiggle or shake'), the chief act among a number of ritual activities. The women must all face in the direction deemed auspicious by the *purohit* as they sing and shake the winnowing basket. After they have sung five *sāguns* the women of the host family rub oil into the hair of the *sādhavā* women and apply vermilion to their foreheads. (Vermilion so applied symbolizes that the woman is *sādhavā*; a woman wears it from the time she is married until she or her husband dies.)

The gathering of these neighboring women to confer their blessings upon the bride or groom by rite and song serves to call to the attention of the neighborhood the approaching rite of passage, a rite which brings a change in the status of the family as well as the bride or groom.

There is no apparent relationship between the ritual of *urdī-chūnā* and the topics of the *sāguns*, although about two-thirds of the *sāguns* pertain to some aspect of marriage. Ideally women sing *sāguns* every night after this until the *vivāh*. The context of the evening sessions is informal. In both the bride's and groom's villages, the women of the neighborhood gather at the appropriate house after the evening meal. This is an inter-caste affair -- if there are neighbors of other castes. I never observed Muslim women at these sessions; I do not know whether they are specifically prohibited. (Untouchable castes do not live in the main settlement of the village.)

The several *sāgun* sessions I attended were held at the home of a Lohār groom. Most of the songs were led by a Brahman woman about fifty years of age who knew and could sing an extraordinary number of songs without pauses due to forgotten words. There were sometimes pauses in the proceedings as the women tried to remember what other songs there were to sing. Literacy was advantageous in such a situation: one educated girl in another neighborhood kept a notebook containing the titles and some of the texts of the songs she knew.

The other women there -- from Lohār, Kahār, Dhobī, and other Brāhman families -- would join the singing when they knew the songs. Songs were terminated if no one joined in. Some songs were sung by only the younger girls. I was told that these were songs learned from the cheap newsprint booklets sold at fairs. Such songs are set to common folk tunes or the tunes of film music.

As mentioned above, *sāguns* are also sung in other of the wedding rites, ideally after such songs as are sung only in connection with that rite.

Here are some selected *sāguns*:

Krishna came to the engagement, girls, everyone came to dance.
 The wedding pole made of wretched *kakari*.
 The wedding canopy made of *pān* leaves, girls, everyone came to dance.
 The groom made of a wretched banana.
 The bride of an orange, girls, everyone came to dance.
 The *tabla*¹⁰ made of a pumpkin,
 The *sainai*¹¹ made of a wretched *ninua*, girls, everyone came to dance.
 The groom's party goes, (they are) wretched potatoes.
 Fanned with wretched radishes, girls, everyone came to dance.
 The bed covered with wretched greens,
 A pillow of *lauki*¹² lay on it.

Commentary: This is the only nonsense song among all of the songs I collected. It is probably a parody. Four of the objects named could be considered phallic symbols, but such an interpretation was never made by singers or other informants.

In the middle of the bank of the Jamuna my Lal¹³ snatched the ornaments.
 The women of Vraj go towards the bank of the Jamuna to fill water vessels.
 In the middle of this Krishna appears and forcefully snatched the ornaments from me.
 He ate my curds, broke the vessel that was on my head, and floated the carrying ring in the Jamuna.
 He took the clothes (of the women) and climbed and sat in the *kadam*¹⁴ tree.
 We were naked in the water, my Lal snatched the ornaments.
 In exchange for the clothes we gave a yellow silk cloth when we came from the water.
 You then are Lal, Nanda Baba's.
 I am the daughter of Brshan.
 Whenever you meet Krishna in the lane, he pinches your cheeks.
 Wearing a lotus leaf, Radha came out.
 Krishna clapped, my Lal snatched the ornaments.
 Restrain your child, Mother Jasoda.
 He roughs me up, my Lal snatched the ornaments.
 Just now Lal plays in the lane.
 When he did abuse you, you don't admonish him.
 He shouts from the direction of the brush, my Lal snatched the ornaments.

Commentary: This is a collation of various episodes from Krishna's childhood. Many if not most of these episodes are found in the *Bhāgavata Purāna*. They probably filtered into the folk songs of this region via the vernacular *bhakti* poets such as Surdas (cf. Pandey and Zide 1968 *passim*). These vignettes are common to many folksongs in the area. The story of Krishna's stealing the clothes of the *gopis* is a favorite. Several of the men's *kajalis* ('songs sung in the monsoon season') are built around the story. One of the popular oleograph religious calendars depicts Krishna playing his flute in the *kadam* tree as the naked *gopis* beseech him to return their saris.

What mistake have I made, husband, that you are giving me so much trouble?
Have I spoiled the food, husband, did I put in too little salt?
Have I spoiled the food, husband, did I put in too little bay leaf?
Did I use too little perfume, husband, that you are giving me so much trouble?
Have I spoiled the *pānī*, husband?
Have I spoiled the *catechu*, husband?
Have I spoiled the bed, husband?
Did you sleep too little?

Commentary: The language of this song was not the language of this region, Bhojpuri, in which most of the songs are sung. An informant said it was a dialect from Western Uttar Pradesh or Rajasthan. He also said that songs such as this actually have a didactic function in warning the bride of marital situations she might face.

Order me a lime-colored sari, dear.
Without wearing one my heart can't be satisfied.
Have a room built, have an *atarī*⁵ built,
Have them cut a little window in it, dear.
Without peeping out my heart can't be satisfied.
Without seeing my heart can't be satisfied.
Order me a lime-colored sari, dear.
Without wearing one my heart can't be satisfied.
Have a little lemon tree planted.
Without plucking (them) my heart can't be satisfied.

Commentary: None of my informants seemed to think the last line was a sexual allusion. The "acquisitive wife" theme is not uncommon (cf. Majumdar 1958: 310-312). Lime-colored saris were in vogue about twenty years ago, according to informants.

My husband having become a member of Congress Party, I will not stay alive.
I will not live; he will not eat the carefully prepared food.
Without self-rule he will not come to the door.
I will not live, he will not drink from the water pot.
Without self-rule, he will not come into the courtyard.
Without self-rule, he will not eat pan.
Without self-rule, he will not sleep on the bed.

Commentary: This song dates from the early 1940s, when to be a member of Congress Party was to be a revolutionary. At that time the Congress Party was leading an often violent anti-British independence movement.

Such a wondrous boy has come, of a rich family.
Your crown is worth lakhs, the fringe of the crown is worth thousands.
Your wedding trousers are worth lakhs, your robe worth thousands.
Your shoes worth lakhs, your socks worth thousands.
The bride worth lakhs, the veil thousands.

Commentary: This song in praise of the groom shows the concern of the women with the high quality of his dress and ornaments. The hyperbole is reminiscent of that used to describe the wedding of Sita and Rama in the *Ramacaritmanas* (the Hindi *Ramayana*). Arya also collected a version of this song in Surinam (1968:80).¹⁶

It has become a habit, father, it has become a habit [this is the refrain].

He chants the name of Ram, father.

The fine food made in the golden *thalī*,¹⁷ Prahalad will not eat the fine food, father, [refrain].

Burn him in the fire, press him down in water, tie him to a post.

I have put water from Himalaya mountains in the vessel.

He will not drink the water, father [refrain].

I fasten his *pan* leaf with cloves.

Prahalad will not chew the *pan* leaf, father, [refrain].

I put flowers on his bed,

Prahalad will not sleep on the bed [refrain].

Haldī.

The ceremony called *haldī* or *hardī* ('turmeric') is performed in the bride's and groom's homes on a date fixed by *purohīts*. Women from the neighborhood are again involved. In addition to rubbing the body of the bride or groom with a turmeric-mustard seed oil mixture (thought to render the skin smooth and lustrous), they perform *cunāvan*, in which each takes a stem of *dūb* grass in each hand and touches the bride's or groom's feet, knees, chest and shoulders, ending by making a circle around his or her head. *Cunāvan* is considered a personal blessing of the nuptial person (paraphrased from Planalp in Lewis 1958: 173).

The bride and groom enter what Turner and Van Gennep would call a "liminal condition." They are not allowed to bathe, to work, or to approach well or fire. Van Gennep calls this condition the first phase in a rite of passage -- the phase of separation. This

"comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions . . . during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject . . . is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. . . . " (Turner 1969: 94).

During the turmeric rubbing the women sing the following three songs:

Korin, Korin,¹⁸ you are a great queen.

From where have you produced the turmeric today?

My Radhika Devi¹⁹ so tender cannot bear the harshness of the turmeric.

Telin, Telin,²⁰ you are a great queen.

From where have you produced the mustard seed oil today?

My Radhika Devi so tender cannot bear the harshness of the mustard seed oil.

Commentary: I thought this song had an unusually pretty tune. This may explain why even some of my male informants could sing it, and why it was one of the few songs in Planalp's (1956) text, which, although detailed in many other respects, includes few songs. Sympathy for the bride expressed in referring to her "tenderness" is also found in other songs.

The girl I saw playing, mother, I see seated on the flour design.
 I see a beautiful flour design, mother.
 Oh mother, I don't know when the barber's wife plastered;²¹
 I don't know_____.
 I see a pretty pot, I see a pretty pot.
 Oh mother, I don't know when the potter made it, I don't know_____.²²
 I see a pretty plow shaft, I see a pretty plow shaft.
 Oh mother, I don't know when the Lohar made it or when he cut it.
 I see a pretty bride, I see a pretty bride.
 Oh mother, I don't know when the god made her or when she was born.

Commentary: This song acknowledges the liminal condition of the bride-to-be by contrasting the image of her as a girl playing with the ritually detached figure seated on the flour design, who seems to have lost her identity, i.e., her "state" has become ambiguous. ('I don't know when the god made her or when she was born.)

Arya maintains that songs such as these which are sung in rites not officiated by *purdhitis* constitutes "ritual formulae" comparable with the *mantras* or *purdhitis* (1968: 12). This concept was never expressed by native informants, nor did I observe any action indicating that the songs were attributed any efficacy, which is the most important attribute of *mantras*.

I didn't get a husband as *rasili*²³ as I.
 His hair is not as pretty as mine.
 I didn't get a *tilak*²⁴ as pretty as my forehead.
 His complexion is not as good as mine.

Commentary: Unlike the two preceding songs, this is a *sāgun* and is not associated specifically with this rite. This is another of those songs that warn the bride of possible disappointments.

There are a number of other important rites on the day when the turmeric is first applied including: preparation and consecration, at the bride's home, of the *mandap* ('the canopy under which major wedding rites are held') and the *kohabar*, the ritually designated room in which wedding items are stored and some of the wedding rites are performed; erection of a ceremonial pole at the groom's home; and rites performed by the neighborhood women and the mother of the nuptial person which secure the blessings of various aspects of the mother goddess (explained below). The last activity involves processions to a well and a tank which, as with all women's processions, are occasions for singing. The songs sung are *sāguns*.

Pitra Nevatina.

On the day of the *vivāh* at the bride's home, and on the evening before the departure of the *barāt* at the groom's home, there is a rite called

pitra nevatinī ('invitation of ancestors'). The women of the household invoke the ancestors into a clay dish on a stove built from clay brought from the tank in the *urđī-śhūnā* rite. The invocation is a song sung by the women of the family in which the names of three generations of ancestors are enumerated.²⁵

In the rite called *koharā kī patī* ('leaves of the sweet pumpkin'), which follows the rite described above, the groom and other unmarried boys and the bride and other unmarried girls eat from leaves of the *koharā* in their respective homes. Rites are performed which again symbolize the changing statuses of the bride and groom (cf. Planalp 1956: 488). After the groom eats, the rest of the *biradarī* is served rice. Wealthier families or those wishing to give the impression of wealth may invite all those men who will comprise the *bārāt*.

Bārāt

On the morning of the departure of the *bārāt*, the 'English band' hired by the groom's father for the occasion comes to the home of the groom. As with many other material aspects of the marriage rites, e.g., entertainment, food served, and accommodations, the quality of the band used depends on the wealth of the nuptial families and their desire to assert their prestige. The 'English band' is the most prestigious kind of musical group used in this context. There are also the *daphālā* band mentioned by Planalp in his 1956 account; the *śahnāī* band of the Banaras area (*śahnāī* is a simple double reed horn with a sound like that of an oboe); and various motley amalgamations of drums, woodwinds, bagpipes, bagpipe chanters and miscellaneous European wind instruments.

Led by the band the women of the family and their neighbors singing *sāguns*, proceed through the village to the grain-parching ovens of the family's *Gor*. (*Gor* is the name of the caste whose traditional occupation is grain parching.) Here one or several of the women dance to the music of the band, and the *Gor* gives them the *lāvā* and *pirhā* (the board seat upon which the groom sits during the wedding rites) are consecrated in a brief *pūjā*. The *bārāt* will take these items, along with a pot containing water from the groom's bath of that morning, to the wedding ceremony. *Cumavār* is again performed with the appropriate songs and the groom is fed curds (an auspicious food) and raw cane sugar.

Wearing a special costume for the wedding the groom rides in a palanquin with a younger brother. Several men explained this with reference to the *Ramayāṇa* in which Ram is accompanied on his journey and in his wedding by Lakṣman, his younger brother. The groom carries a white onion in his pocket to protect him from the *lū* ('a seasonal hot west wind'). *Kahars* generally carry the palanquin. Led by the band and followed by the women, they carry the groom to the edge of the village, where the mother of the groom perform a *parean* ('a kind of worship') by revolving a pestle over his head.

This is another occasion in which one or two of the women dance, encouraged by the others, to the music of the band. As with the gathering at the ovens of the Gōr, there are, in accordance with *pardā* restrictions, no men present, except those in the band. (The institutional correlate of this is the female impersonator who fills the role of "dancing woman" in most public performances.) The dancer moves in a circle. There are many stylistic idiosyncracies, but generally the torso is upright and relaxed, the hips oscillating gracefully as the feet perform tight, almost mincing steps. The more sophisticated dancers learn to use their hands, eyes, and head expressively, in a manner reminiscent of classical Indian dance styles, seeming to mime a woman coyly communicating with her lover.

After the dancing the groom's mother showers the collected women and children with coins, for which there is a mad scramble. The women return to their homes and the Kahars carry the palanquin off towards the village of the bride.

The *bārāt* members may ride their bicycles or take public transportation or a chartered bus if the distance is great. The groom generally travels by palanquin, although wealthy families hire a taxi for the transportation of the groom and his brother and father.

The *bārāt*, band, and members of the bride's family await the arrival of the groom on the edge of the village. If the families involved are wealthy, there may be what I interpreted as a mock charge after the groom has arrived. In the one such event I observed, the groom's party formed a line facing the line of the bride's party, which was about thirty yards away, facing away from the village. Esteemed members of the groom's party were, on this occasion, mounted on elephants (according to informants, the auspicious symbols of Ganesh, the elephant-headed son of Siva and the deity who ensures the success of new endeavor, but here also symbolic of the role of conqueror, which surfaces at several points in the wedding rites.) These *bārātīs* fired their shotguns, at which the elephants charged at full tilt towards the bridal line. The *bārāt* then followed the band to the bride's home. In most cases upon the arrival of the groom the band merely leads the procession to the bridal home. As they approach, the women of the house sing from the veranda. The singing usually coincides with the playing of the band and is thus heard only intermittently by anyone but the women themselves. The scene is one of great excitement and chaos, both augmented by the scores of screaming children who converge to see the spectacle and hear the band.

The following songs were recorded at an actual wedding. Their fragmentary nature is due in part to the noisy conditions and in part to the fact that the women occasionally forget words and run songs together.

Dyār Puja

What group gets down under the mango and tamarind trees,
the shade as cool as that of the *kadam*?²⁶
Because of your sacrifice, grandfather, we searched out a
groom like Raja Bali.²⁷

A crown installed upon the head of the groom,
He comes to the door like Raja Bali.

Commentary: The royal status given to the groom in this song is expressed in song and ritual throughout the wedding rites. It shows that the women are culturally expected to revere the groom. They may also resent him, as expressed in later songs. This song stands alone in the wadding as an expression of gratitude. The sacrifice of the grandfather (and thus the extended family of which he is the nominal head) in searching out a groom, i.e., in arranging for the girl's marriage, is recognized.

Lo el lo le, he comes to the home of the bride's father.
The handsome groom comes to the home of the bride's father.

Hey groom, grow a good mustache.
Apply the color of the *bhagara*.²⁸
Oh people of Mardapur, shine the lights, the thieves of Dudhaura come.
Thieves of mothers, thieves of sisters, the thieves of Dudhaura come.

Commentary: This is another of the several references to conquest the bride seizure which occur in the wedding. The theme is discussed at the end of this section.

You shouted that you would bring elephants; you didn't bring elephants!
Fuck your sister; you didn't bring elephants!
You come to ravish the bride!
You shouted that you would bring a band; you didn't bring a band!

Commentary: This song insults the groom's family by calling them miserly liars. The presence of elephants or horses and band are signs to the bride's village and other observers and participants of the economic status of the groom's family and thereby the bride's family. Their absence is an affront to the bride's family and robs it of prestige.

When the *bārāt* forms a crowd at the door.
Hit! Hit the target!

Commentary: This is another reference to the conquest theme.

After the bride's mother performs a *parcan* and she and the bride's sisters give ritualized blessings, the *dvar pūjā* ('worship at the door') is performed. On a small area which has been ritually purified by sweeping with cow dung and water, a design (*cauk*) has been drawn with flour.²⁹ Here the *purohit* leads the bride's father and groom through a *pūjā*. The *bārāt* is then led to the area in which lines of cots have been placed for lounging and sleeping, where they receive the best refreshments the bride's family can manage and are entertained by a musical group. Later in the evening a meal is served to the *bārāt*. Then, at about midnight, the *vivāh* is performed.

Vivāh.

Before the *vivāh* the barber's wife, who is the bride's chief

attendant, washes the bride using some of the water from the groom's bath (brought by the *barit*). This "symbolizes the first intimate contact between the couple" (Planalp 1956: 504). The bride's *mānā* ('classificatory mother's brother') presents gifts to the bride's mother and her *parjunīā*. The women may address a few *gālī* to him.

The women of the bride's family and neighborhood always sing in the *vivāh*. If the bridal *purohit* lives nearby, women from his family also may attend and sing. The groups do not often sing together. The *gālī* is generally, but not always, the product of the bride's female relatives. The presence of the Brahman women is considered auspicious. They are rewarded with token payments (called *dakṣinā*, the same term given to the payments made to a Brahman priest) by the bride's family. The groom's father must make a token payment to the bride's female relatives and party who sing.

After the *bārāt* is seated in the *mandap*, a *purohit* performs the *pūjā* of the presiding deities. The groom's side presents ornaments and clothing to the bride as the women sing:

You have brought borrowed ornaments and are causing them to
glitter in my *mandap*.
Elder brother of the groom, you fuck your sister.

Commentary: Here we again see the accusations of miserliness and deceit.

The groom took the box of ornaments and came into the *mandap*.
He came, the groom came, the groom took the box of vermillion,
and came into the *mandap*.
He came, the groom came, the groom took the gold and silver and
came into the *mandap*,
He came, the groom came, the groom came into the *mandap* with great
pomp and show.

Commentary: This is one of the songs which contains only description of ritual activity, suggesting that the occasion is a momentous one for the women.

After the ornaments are consecrated by the *purohit*, everyone scrutinizes them and the *purohit* enumerates each item aloud. Attention then shifts to the groom's older brother (referred to by the bride as *bhasur*). The women sing:

The *bhasur* has a nose like a *cilam*.
He stares at my daughter in the *mandap*.
The *bhasur* has long, long legs.
These legs stride into my *mandap*.
The teeth of the *bhasur* split big chunks of wood.

The *bhasur* then performs a particularized worship of the bride involving many ritual offerings. Informants always said that this is the only time he touches the bride (their relationship is normatively one of avoidance).

As the groom and his father sit near the *purohit*, the women are singing:

Mother ask Supher the groom: "Why are you smeared looking?"
Your mother slept under a palm tree; you are that very color.
Your mother slept with a dog; you are black like that.
Mother asks Supher the groom: "Why do you bark like that?"
Your mother slept with a wolf: you bark just like that.

In the upper room the groom adjusts the crown.
There the groom's mother supplicates the sun deity.
Don't let anyone put the evil eye on my groom.
Today don't let anyone put the evil eye on the groom and bride.
In the upper room the groom adjusts the ornaments.
There the groom's father's sister supplicates the sun deity.
In the upper room the groom adjusts his *dhoti*.³⁰
There the groom's father's brother's wife supplicates the sun deity.

Commentary: This is a *sāgun*. It is indicative of the mothers' fears of mishap on this important occasion and the usual mode of response to such fears -- worship of a deity considered capable of providing protection.

Look at the crown. Don't forget, mister, that the crown is borrowed.
The groom is of a whore; the bride is of a faithful woman.
Look at the bracelet. Don't forget, mister, that the bracelet is borrowed.

Commentary: Here the accusation of deceit is coupled with one of immorality, a common strategy in *gāli*. Informants said that a dishonorable family might give the bride ornaments belonging to women of the family which would be taken back from the bride when she came to live with the groom.

The groom takes *sakalp* ("resolve"), declaring to the gods his intention of marrying. The bride's father seats the groom and worships him with ritual offerings. Informants pointed out that this treatment is worthy of a *raja*. It symbolizes the ascendancy of the groom's family to the bride's in all relations. The groom dons the new yellow *dhoti* given to him by the bride's father. The women sing:

Put on the lower and upper garments sewn by your Muslim father.
Put on the *dhoti* spun by a concubine, son of a whore.
Put on the *dhoti* spun by a concubine, son of a rich man.

Commentary: Here we see how a sung expression may contradict a simultaneous ritual expression in another medium. The contradicting expressions of groom-worship and groom-abuse reflect the ambiguity with which the affinal relationship is regarded. There followed a *gāli* ridiculing the appearance of the groom.

The *purohita* start the havan fire and release the ancestral spirits from the captivity of the clay dishes. This is called *gotra car* ('the calling of the clan'). The bride re-enters and she and the groom again worship the gods. Because of the importance of the themes of the next three songs, they are discussed together at the end of this section.

God Ram has brought them together.
The barber found the groom, the Brahman reckoned the day.
Burn the barber's beard! Burn the Brahman's books!
Oh, father has taken great advantage of me, Mother.
Oh, how can I curse him enough, Mother?

What kind of *grahan*³¹ obtains from evening to morning?
What kind of *grahan* obtains when half the night is passed?
What kind of *grahan* obtains in the *mandap*?
When will the sun come?
What kind of *grahan* obtains at four in the morning?
Oh, the *grahan* of the sun obtains from evening to morning.
The *grahan* of the moon daughter obtains in the *mandap* when
half the night is passed.
In the morning the sun will come.

The next stage is called *kanyadān* ('the gift of the virgin daughter!') The father announces to the gods that he is giving his daughter. The *purohit* places the bride's hands together palms up on the similarly held hands of her father, and the groom's hands likewise upon hers. Then the *purohit* places various ritual items in the groom's hands, and the bride's brother pours water over the layers of hands and ritual objects. The women are singing:

Oh brother Dasarath Ram, don't stop the flow of water.
If the flow is broken, your sister will become angry.
Brother Dasarath Ram, don't the bow and arrow.
Oh brother, your sister's husband will surely come, he will
fight with you on the battlefield.
My brother fought all day but he lost in the evening.
Oh he loses Tila Devi, his sister; Supher the groom has won.
Oh brother Dasarath Ram, what thoughts have you forgotten?
Brother, you have not lost cows or oxen, you have lost your sister.
Oh, it is good to forget about sister Tila Devi.
Cows and oxen are our wealth, brother; sisters that of another.

Commentary: The themes of family conquest and bride seizure again manifest in this song. Kurukhet is the vernacular form of Kuruksetra, the mythical battlefield upon which the Kurus and the Pandavas fought in the epic *Mahābhārata*. The term may be used here in a generic sense.

After the *purohita* declare to the gods and spirits of the ancestors that the bride's family is donating the bride, the groom's father is made to say by the *purohit* that he is giving the groom his daughter for him to protect, support, and master. He places his daughter's hands palms down in those of the groom to signify that she is given.

The rite called *krisharpan* (presentation of gifts) follows. The bride's father gives *dakṣiṇā* to the pandits, gives the vow of *godān* (the gift of cows to a Brahman) and token payments to the *purohit* and *parjunīā*. The bride stands by the groom and her father blesses them: "May you live as long as there is water in the Ganges and Jamuna rivers." With his arms crossed, he throws rice at them. The groom gives the *purohita* *dakṣiṇā* and his own *purohit* and his own *purohit* the *godān* vow. As the *purohita* perform another *havan* the women are singing:

The *bārāt*'s pandit, pretending to call for water, calls for his sister.
"Slam the door! I will die of shame before my father" [she says].
"My brother is honorable" [says the narrator of the song].
All the members of the *bārāt* call for their sisters!

Commentary: This song shows that even the Brahman *purohit* whose divinity demands that he be treated "as a god on earth," is the object of *gāli*.

The Brahman's mother is like the midden covered with greens.³²
Listen, Brahman, quickly perform my daughter's fire sacrifice.
The smoke has spread to the young and tender.
The Brahman is a half mind, like a clod from the tank.
Listen, Brahman, quickly perform my daughter's fire sacrifice.
The Brahman's scrotum is like the shopkeeper's balance.
The Brahman's sister is like the bamboo cane.

Commentary: Here sympathy for the bride is again demonstrated, in the context of insulting the *purohit*. The shopkeeper's balance always hangs unevenly; bamboo cane tends to lean and catch the clothes of passersby.

In the following stage the groom stands behind the bride, his arms around her and a basket in his hands. Her brother pours the *lāvā* ('parched rice') from both the bride's and the groom's sides into the basket. The women are singing:

Mix your *lāvā* and our *lāvā* together.
Have our father and your mother sleep together.
Have our father's brother and your father's brother's wife sleep together.

Commentary: This song expresses the new social union which has been established, not only of bride and groom, but of all members of their families. (This song was also collected by Arya in Surinam. Cf. Arya 1968: 78.)

The groom then pours the *lāvā* onto the *mandap* floor, a *purohit* divides it into seven small piles, and the groom walks on them. (A *purohit* said that this symbolizes the seven circumambulations of the marriage pole and sacrificial fire by the bride and groom.) This is followed by the proclamation by the presiding *purohit* of the rules of marriage incumbent upon husband and wife. The bride and groom circumambulate the fire and ritual items three times and sit, the bride to the left of the groom.

Sindur dān. (the gift of vermillion) is the title of the subsequent and apical stage of the *vivāh*. The groom applies the consecrated vermillion to the bride's forehead. The women sing:

I am shamed before my grandfather, my longhaired grandfather.
I am shamed before my father's brother, my longhaired father's brother.
I am shamed before my brother, my longhaired brother.

Oh, I call grandfather himself; he does not speak.
Oh, grandfather forces the groom to apply vermillion.
Oh, father's brother forces the groom to apply vermillion.
Oh, my brother forces the groom to apply vermillion.

Commentary: Both this and the prior song depict the stereotypical emotions of the bride: she feels humiliated and betrayed at her abandonment by the males of her family.

Informants say the application of vermillion is the climax of the wedding, the point at which the bride becomes 'the groom's.' The bride's sisters come forward and touch up the vermillion; the groom's father gives them saris and money. Then the groom gets up and sits down on the left of the bride, which is also supposed to symbolize that she is his.

After finalizing rites conducted by the *purohīts*, who again receive cash payments, everyone leaves the *mandap* but the bride and her friends. They perform *cumavān*, singing among others the following song:

With rice and green grass, let us to to the *cumavān*.
Touch her head, give the blessing.
Live, bride and groom, 100,000 years.
Live as long as the earth and sky.
Enjoy as the night enjoys the moon.

Commentary: The 'night/moon' simile is found in classical Sanskrit poetry.

The women of the bride's family (but not the bride) proceed to the *kohabar*, where there are informal rites involving the groom. The women sing songs such as the following:

This new *kohabar*, of gold and brass.
With great commotion goes the groom, born of a plowman.
Slowly, slowly goes my daughter, born of an emperor.

Whose mother comes in to awaken, Tila Devi?
Get up, son, it's dawn.
Give that kind of a mother into the hands of the Turks, into the
hands of the Moguls, into the hands of the Pathan's.
Who says, when half the night has passed, that it's morning.

Commentary: This song hints at the ways in which a mother-in-law can make life miserable for a woman; the stereotypical mother-in-law is jealous of her son's wife and resents their intimacy.

I did not have the opportunity to attend the activities at the home of the groom during the evening of the *vivāh*, but according to Planalp:

While the marriage rites are taking place at the bride's house, the women of the groom's family, and their friends, sing and dance throughout the evening. The occasion is referred to as *Nakata*. At the time when they estimate the ancestral spirits are being invoked in the bride's village, they too release the *pītris* (ancestral spirits) confined in the clay cup on the miniature stove near the marriage pole. It is believed that the ancestral spirits are instantly transported to the place of the wedding (1956: 513).

Khicari

Khicari is the name given to *dāl* ('a kind of lentil') mixed with rice, the food customarily eaten by the bride and groom on the second day of the wedding. One more educated informant told me that *khicari* symbolizes the new couple, the rice being conceived as masculine and the *dāl* (which is semi-liquid in form) feminine.

Khicari is held in the forenoon or afternoon of the second day. All of the dowry items are displayed on a table in the home of the bride (these often include wristwatches, pens, stainless steel dishes, transistor radios, etc.). The groom is expected to object to the quality of the items given or to demand other items. After the haggling over what else he will receive, the groom and younger boys from his party are seated for the eating of *khicari*. The groom may refuse to eat until he extracts a commitment for some other desired item. As the party is eating, the women, from behind a curtain or in a semi-concealed location, sing *gālī*. For this "service" they must be compensated by a small payment from the groom's father.

The *gālī* presented below were recorded at a session which followed a *kathā* ('a kind of sacrificial ceremony in which moral parables are told'). The songs were sung for my benefit as well as the entertainment of the visiting (agnate) family members. One of their *birādari*, seated beside me, and I were the targets of the *gālī*, rather than affinal males, as would usually be the case. These *gālī*, however, are quite typical: I specifically recall having heard the final one in many *gālī*-singing situations.

Commentary is largely reserved for the explanatory section on *gālī*.

Brother, Patna is a pleasant city, brother, Patna is a pleasant city.
Corrupted in childhood, Henari Ram and Ram Sagar Mishra are the
sons of whores.

Their sister was corrupted by Ram Chandra.

They eat from their sister's earnings; tears come into her eyes.

Henari and Ram Sagar eat from the earnings of their sisters.

They submit themselves to sodomy, brother, Patna is a pleasant city.

Commentary: Informants could not explain the refrain ('Patna is a pleasant city'); perhaps the song is an adaptation of another song with that refrain.

At the low bathing place of the high pond there is a pleasant bungalow.

There Henari's sister takes a bath.

Daya Shankar's sister takes a bath.

Our Kesauram went there to look (at them) suggestively.

Our Laukai Ram went there to look (at them) suggestively.

Open the *gughat*,³³ they will look at her cheeks.

Her cheeks are like a red wave.

Open the *colli*,³⁴ look at the goods.

The goods are like limes and pomegranates.

Open the *puputi*, they will look at the pubic hair.

Open the petticoat, they will look at the moon.

It is just like lightning.

Commentary: The moon symbolizes the vagina. Perhaps line twelve means "It gives great light (like a large moon)."

The rain starts, the clouds are dense and black, every lane is pure water.

She starts to come out, wearing golden clogs; she slips in the middle of the courtyard.

I ask you, Mister Henari, is your sister running away?

I ask you, Mister Ram Sagar, is your sister being lured away?

Will judgment be given nowhere but at the door of Indra Jit Ram?

You must feed five or ten Brahmins, Henari.

You must feed five or ten Brahmins, Ram Sagar.

The sin will be expiated.

You must bathe at Kasi Visasar Gaj,³⁶ Henari.

Myself, I keep my father's daughters and grandfather's grand-daughters under my control.

Who will pass judgment?

Commentary: The meaning of line five is unclear; it probably means that Indra Jit is the man with whom their sisters are consorting.

Flee, son of a whore, flee on the Kelhi.

Henry's sister copulates in a field on the plains of Delhi.

Hindu, Muslim, that cumin seed, that coriander seed, one climbs on behind, one before.

There is saliva in your father's mouth, in your father's mouth there is water.

Give the price of my *gāli*, Henari Ram, give, relatives!

My Govinda fucks your sisters. Give, relatives!

Commentary: The last two lines refer to the practice of demanding payment for the "service" of *gāli*-singing from the attending affines.

In most cases the *vidāi* ('formal farewell') is held after *khicari* on the second day of the wedding. At that time the *purohita* are presented

with payments of cash and clothing. The fathers of the newlyweds ritually embrace and shake hands prior to the departure of the groom's party.

Arrangements for the bride's departure vary according to circumstances too complicated to discuss here. In some cases she accompanies the groom to his home after the *vivāh* to stay a few days before returning to her father's home. In other cases she remains in her home until the *gāṇā*.

Planalp (1956: 531) and Lewis (1958: 183) report songs which are sung on the occasion of the bride's departure, indicative of the distress and fright which she feels at the prospect of leaving her family and friends to assume a low status in an alien family and the role of wife to a man she does not know.

Women's Music, Repertoire, Performance, and Attitudes.

In this sub-section I deal briefly with leadership in the performance of the women's songs, the relationship between repertoire and social structure, and attitudes towards the functions of women's songs.

As mentioned above, in addition to the women of the bride's family and neighborhood, women of the bridal *purohit*'s family may sing in the *vivāh*. The two groups may sit next to one another or they may be seated on different sides of the *mandap*, but in either case there is no attempt to coordinate their singing. At times they may even sing different songs simultaneously. In both groups, the leader is usually the wife of the figure among the women, but her knowledge of the songs, gained from long experience, is also a factor. To the best of my knowledge, those songs tied to particular rites are never rehearsed. Therefore, unless the songs are similar to those sung in their natal homes, the young wives have not had sufficient exposure to the songs to have learned them. Younger women may know some of the *sāguns* better than the older women because some of them are recent compositions and *sāguns* can be sung on any occasion. Although contemporary songs have been adopted into the body of recreational songs, the songs associated with particular rituals, as demonstrated by their occasionally archaic references, appear to be very conservative.

The women of the *purohit* families seemed to be generally more proficient singers than the women of other castes (by no great margin), due to the experience they get in singing for the weddings of other families. There is a wide range in the proficiency of singing even among the *purohit* women -- some families and individuals simply take more interest in singing than others, and there are of course differing degrees of ability.

The repertoires of different neighborhood groups vary considerably. Different groups sing different songs and different versions of the same

song. This is due in part to the differing local origins of the women. Women learn some songs in their natal homes which they may later teach to women in their conjugal families and neighborhood singing groups.³⁷

To return to the subject of performance, one aspect of the women's singing which is surprising to a Western observer is that in many of the rites, especially in the *dvar pūjā* and the *vivāh*, it competes with a variety of other sounds and activities. In the *dvar pūjā* and *vivāh* the singing at times coincides with the chanting of mantras by *purohīts* or discussions between them and other participants. This seemingly unfavorable context of music, in which it is not awarded primary attention, prompts two questions: (a) are the words of the songs understood? and (b) what are the attitudes towards women's songs which support this usage?

The answer to the first question is a qualified "yes." Not only do the songs have to compete with other sound, but the language of the songs differs somewhat from the language of ordinary discourse. One factor, however, overrides these -- what Alan Lomax has called the "multi-leveled redundancy" of singing. This comprehensive term includes such factors as textual repetition (of which there is a great deal in these songs -- a song of four lines may last as many minutes); the unique "vocal stance" of singing (i.e., its distinctive sound quality); and repetitious meter and melody, all of which make song more penetrating than speech (Lomax 1968: 14-15). Lapses in competing sound also allow bits of the song or whole songs to be heard unimpeded. Although most people present (other than the singers) probably do not comprehend each word of the texts of the songs, they know the topics and have general ideas about how they are developed in the songs.

The attitudes of men and women towards women's song differ. During the *vivāh* men do not often listen attentively to the songs. They are more interested in the ritual proceedings, in which there are often disputes over procedures and payments. But men do value the songs, saying that they are *mangal* ('auspiciousness'). As such, the songs are thought to augment the glory of the wedding and to insure its success and the success of the marriage. Thus their mere performance is enough to satisfy the men's expectations. The women's attitude is that music is called for by a particular context of ritual and has its value as a part of the context. Enjoyment of the "beauty" of the songs is therefore not a reason for their performance -- formal aspects of the songs are not judged as to whether they are pretty or beautiful, nor is vocal quality criticized. This was brought out in conversations I had with the women. When the subject turned to music, I would ask if they had any "favorite" songs, or if they thought any songs were especially "pretty." These concepts were alien to them. Most said only that they like all the songs. But one young woman, who had some education and took a greater interest in explanations, said:

"In its own place, every song is pretty. On its occasion, each is pretty. If a wedding song was sung now, it wouldn't be liked. When will it be considered pretty? When there will be a wedding, then. So at every time, the [appropriate] song is felt to be beautiful. When it is its time, then it is felt to be good. And if the time is passed, it doesn't have a good effect."

For women, then, the primary value of a song is as a part of a valuable context, which is often a ritual context.

The ways in which Hindu men and women of the village evaluate the women's ritual singing are similar to the evaluations of older members of an American Indian group, the Navahos. McAllester (1954: 3-6; 71-73) has termed this the 'instrumental' esthetic. Music is evaluated primarily in terms of the goal(s) of the ritual in which it is performed. Among older Navahos, an individual values the music of a ritual whose goals he values. Such evaluation is apparently based on a conception of music as an instrument which contributes to the attainment of the goals of the ritual. In the area under study here, this concept is a part of the *magal* concept and is implicit in the young woman's explanation quoted above. The evaluation of ritual music according to an instrumental esthetic is possible a widespread phenomenon; the problem merits further cross-cultural research.

The Meanings of Wedding Songs.

Before discussing the meanings of the performance and texts of wedding songs, two preliminary points should be noted regarding the general relationship of music and village social organization, i.e., how music shapes certain social processes. First, singing constitutes one of women's roles in the society. It is an expected item of women's behavior in (a) family rites, and (b) public rites in which the women participate. Women sing whenever they appear collectively in public. (Such appearances are always in connection with a sacred rite of some type.) Secondly, women's song is a cooperative group expression. As such it is not only the medium of shared cognitions, sentiments, attitudes, and beliefs, but unifies in a common endeavor the members of the group who must cooperate to perform them.

The unification of women in the wedding by their collective role as singers opposes them to men, the non-singers. The opposition is another manifestation of the general opposition of the roles of men and women, e.g., superordinate/subordinate; insiders (agnates)/outsiders (affines); sons/daughters; public figures/secluded (household) figures.

In addition to the effects on the social organization of the wedding rites which singing has, wedding songs contain meaning which in many cases is not evoked by other forms of symbolic action within the rituals. The meanings of the songs derive not only from the content (i.e., texts) of the songs, but from the social context and the ritual activities in which the singing occurs.

The discussion of the meanings of wedding songs below is divided according to the themes of primary importance in the songs: insult, the plight of the bride, and conquest. In each case the social implications of the texts of the songs and its broadcast by and to certain social parties will be explained.

The texts of gālī

The most common basic strategy of insult in *gālī* is the assertion of immoral sexual behavior -- adultery, incest, sodomy, and pederasty. The use of sexual simile, with its raw, rude imagery is appropriate in the expression of hostility. But underlying this, as well as other strategies employed in *gālī*, is the insinuation of lowness, which is another manifestation of the hierarchical principle pervading Indian culture. Immoral people are inferior to ourselves. This insinuation is made more explicit in *gālī* used only in addressing affines (at least in the weddings in which these *gālī* were recorded), which assert that "Our men screw your women." One implication is that the men of one's own family take what they want from the women of the affinal family. Not only do they take, but they degrade the women in the process. The degradation of a woman is a stigma on her family's character, as well as on her own. This is clearly brought out in the next-to-the-last song, where someone's sister is running or being lured away, and her brother is instructed to feed Brahmans and bathe in the Ganges to expiate the sin of his sister. In one song the degradation is not put in sexual terms, but is made even more explicit: the groom is born of a plowman and the daughter of an emperor.

In another strategy, employed in three of the *gālī*, the affines are called deceivers and misers, e.g., "You promised you would bring elephants and you didn't," and "Don't forget: the bracelets are borrowed.": As mentioned above, the prestige gained by the bride's family from an impressive *bārāt* (with brightly uniformed band and elephants or horses, etc., is one of the expected benefits of the marriage -- it is as important as many of the material transactions involved.

The social context of gālī

In discussing the relationship between *gālī* and the social context in which it is sung, it must be remembered that *gālī* is sung by women before affinal men and *purohīts* in the homes of both bride and groom. Thus it is not only the groom's family that is abused, as one would expect given its acquisition of bride, dowry, and superordinate status at the expense of the bride's family. Rather it is whenever affinals convene that the women of one family insult the males of the other, and in the wedding rites, the attending *purohīts* as well.

A consideration of the nature of the affinal and *purohit-jajmān* relationships, particularly with respect to the wedding, is helpful in explaining the occurrence of *gālī*. In each of the meetings of members of the two families there are exchanges and negotiated commitments involving expenditures, some of which are highly particularized. For example, the *tilak*

involves payment of the dowry, gifts of cash to the groom and his brothers, payment of the bride's father's *parjantā* by the groom's father, settling the quality of entertainment which will be hired, and the jewelry which the bride will received from the groom's family. Although there are ranges of expectations governing each amount, there are no "fixed prices," and bitterness is not an uncommon result. Disappointments also arise for both parties when hospitality, accommodations, and "pomp and show" do not meet with expectations. Conflict and competition are inherent in the relationship, with both parties attempting to maximize gain and prestige, and minimize expenditure.

The conflict is intensified by the concept of *ādar* ('honor'), which is in turn compounded by the public knowledge of all wedding arrangements and events -- everyone in the village has expectations regarding the scale and quality of hospitality, entertainment, etc.³⁹ Any misunderstanding, deception, or scrimping resulting in the disappointment of the other family is liable to be interpreted by it as well as the rest of the village as an intentional affront to the family.

There is also a basic conflict between the bridal *purohit*, who presides in the *vivāh*, and the *jajmān*. The *purohit*'s role is such that he can threaten to withhold consecration of the rites, which would jeopardize the marriage by offending the gods, if he is not remunerated as he sees fit. In the course of the wedding there are many points at which he can demand payment. Some of these situations are legitimate by tradition, but some are not as clear-cut. The term *lālāṭ* ('greedy') is often heard at these times. His demands are tempered, however, by the necessity of maintaining his long-term relationship with his *jajmān* and by fear of general censure. The groom's *purohit* is insulted in the *vivāh* as a member of the groom's party rather than as a *purohit*.

The natives themselves explained *gali* by saying that it is a kind of "joke" (one of those whom asked actually used the English word) which relaxes the guests and promotes harmony. Given the conflict-endowed nature of the affinal and *purohit-jajmān* relationships, this explanation is persuasive.

In his discussions of the joking relationship, Radcliffe-Browne has made the following points: joking relationships tend to arise in relations in which there are strong conjunctive and disjunctive forces, i.e., in relationships in which it is in the interests of both parties to maintain the relationship in spite of the many conflicts inherent in it. Second,

Any serious hostility is prevented by the playful antagonism of teasing, and this in its regular repetition is a constant expression or reminder of that social disjunction which is one of the essential components of the relation, while the social conjunction is maintained by the friendliness that takes no offence at insult. (1952: 90-95).

The desirability of establishing and maintaining affinal relations, i.e., the conjunctive forces in the relationship, include the necessity of marrying offspring, the prestige gained by the wedding, and alliance with a family of comparable or greater prestige, as well as economic strengthening. The conflicts inherent in the affinal relationship and the conjunctive and disjunctive components of the *purohit-jajman* relationship have been brought above. The theory also accounts for the tolerant reactions of those being insulted, who, as mentioned above, never express any hostility.

The obscenity of the songs is also an important factor in their function. Evans-Pritchard has noted that:

1. The withdrawal by society of its normal prohibitions (of the use of obscenity) gives special emphasis to the social value of the activity.
2. It also canalizes human emotion into prescribed channels of expression (1965: 101, quoted in Turner 1969: 92).

With regard to the first point, the villagers themselves recognize the integrative effects of *gāñ*, as noted above. The second point is also applicable here. There is obviously a great deal of tension inherent in the wedding. Apparently the songs not only deter socially dysfunctional channeling of energy, but they also provide catharsis to the singers.

The plight of the bride.

Throughout the *vivāh*, the bride assumes a flexed, stooped posture. When she moves to and from the *mandap*, she must be assisted by the barber's wife. Her sari is pulled so far down over the face that it is completely hidden to onlookers. These factors all symbolize the new roles which the bride is assuming, roles in which, as Karve has said, she is nearly a non-entity. As explained in the introductory sketch of social organization, the passage of a girl from daughter to wife involves exchanging independence and affection for strictly delimited freedom, deference, and rivalry. The bride stereotypically resents these imposed changes and feels humiliated at having been manipulated.

When I asked people why the bride assumed the flexed posture, they said *sam kī vajah se* ('because of humiliation'). The songs sung as the bride is being given away by her father enunciate these feelings. Her anger and sense of betrayal, for example, are revealed in this song: "Oh, father has taken great advantage of me, Mother. . . . Oh, how can I curse him enough, Mother?" and also here:

Oh, I call grandfather himself; he does not speak.
Oh, grandfather forces the groom to apply vermilion.
Oh, father's brother forces the groom to apply vermilion.
(My) brother forces the groom to apply vermilion.

The bride's humiliation is also expressed in another song:

I am shamed before my grandfather, my longhaired grandfather.
I am shamed before my father's brother, my longhaired father's
brother.
I am shamed before my brother, my longhaired brother.

Another song indicates that the women felt the "seizure" of the bride as awful as the eclipse of the moon. The open acknowledgement of the emotions of the bride by the singing of these songs mobilizes sympathy for her and thereby facilitates her adjustment.

One song states that the bride's brother loses his sister to the groom and then:

What teachings have you forgotten?
You have not lost cows or oxen, you have lost your sister.
Oh, it is good to forget about sister Tila Devi.
Cows and oxen are our wealth, brother; sisters that of another.

A woman has affectionate relationships in her natal home; the most affectionate are with her brothers. These are severed by her marriage, except for occasional visits in the first years of marriage. This song recognizes the sadness of the brother at the "loss" of his sister, then reminds him and the others present that (in accordance with the rules of the society) sisters belong not to the family into which they are born, but to that into which they marry.

Conquest.

The above song also states that the brother must surrender his sister because of his loss on the battlefield. This refers to the time when Rajput kins feuded over the marriage of their daughters.

In the twelfth century . . . the country (Rajputana, the area from which there were mass migrations to Eastern Uttar Pradesh) was ruled by hundreds of small independent Rajput kings or lords, who fought among themselves constantly and over the most trifling matters. Whenever a beautiful daughter of one of these kings or chieftains became nubile, his rival would often attack him in order to force him to marry his daughter to one of their number. If the girl's side was defeated, the marriage preparation were made. However, her supporters usually sought to surprise the victorious groom's side with an attack while they were busy with the marriage rites. Thus, there grew up a tradition of fighting under the *mandap*. (Planalp 1956: 522).

The theme of conquest is alluded to by a number of other elements in the wedding: the descent of the groom and his "forces" upon the bride's village and home is one instance. The band playing its brassy tunes, the formidable elephants or aristocratic horses (which are sometimes used in mock attacks on the bride's home) and the use of firearms are highly appreciated ostentation. But they also allude to the era when a raja's army marched into the village to forcefully take a body and embody the martial ethos of that situation. The reference to wars between the feudal rajas

is found in other of the women's songs: the one in which the *bārāt* is depicted as thieves of mother and daughters, the one containing the call to shoot at the *bārāt* as it crowds beneath the *mandap*.

The identification of the groom's party as the conquerors in these songs, and the singing of the songs before the groom and his party in the *mandap*, emphasize the role of the groom's family as dominant in the wedding, and the ascendant position in the marriage alliance.

Summary.

The wedding is the most important event in Hindu social life. I have shown how women's songs are integral parts of the wedding rites, how they provide unduplicated meanings to the rites, and how they reflect social structure and shape social organization in their singing.

The wedding song texts which have been presented reveal a wide variety of themes including: (a) descriptions of the ritual activities themselves; (b) descriptions of marital situations; (c) political concerns; (d) mythological persons and events; (e) obscene insults; (f) reactions of the bride and her family members to her transfer to the home and family of the groom; and (g) concern with Rajput origins and the Rajput martial ethos.

The hierarchical principle which explains much behavior in this society pervades music as well, and is often an underlying theme in wedding song texts, alluding in some cases to the asymmetry of the affinal relationship.

The singing of the songs in the rites performs several important functions: it contributes to the control of inherent conflicts in affinal and *purohit-jajman* relations by symbolically recognizing oppositional and unifying forces in the relations; channels what might otherwise be dysfunctional emotion; and articulates stereotyped emotional reactions to the rituals themselves and to social changes resulting from marriage, thereby easing the adjustment of all involved to the new situation.

NOTES

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2. The last sentence paraphrases one of Karve's (1965). This discussion draws from Karve at several points as well as from Vatuk (1971).
3. A *jajmān* is a landholder who "employs" various *parjuniā*: usually a Brahman -- 'priest;' Dhobī -- 'clotheswasher;' Lohar -- 'carpenter-blacksmith;' Nau -- 'barber;' and Kahar -- 'water carrier.' Compensation includes shares of harvests, and cooked food, cash, and clothing on major festivals and certain ceremonial occasions such as the wedding.
4. The chief ingredient of *bhāng* is *cannabis indica*, the South Asian variety of marijuana.
5. As is the case with many of the rites, the name of one central item in the rite is used to refer to the entire rite. This is a kind of metonymy.
6. A small double-headed drum which produces a steady rattling sound.
7. Zucchini squash. The possible sexual symbolism was not mentioned by informants.
8. The departure of the bride to her husband's home for her first period of residence there.
9. A long, slender, light green cucumber.
10. A kind of drum commonly used in Hindustani classical music.
11. A double reed wind instrument sounding somewhat like an oboe.
12. A large green squash, about five inches in diameter and sixteen inches long.
13. Lal is a term of endearment which a mother uses to address her son. It is also an epithet of Krishna.
14. *Nerulica cadamba*.
15. Meaning unknown.
16. Many of the 34,000 Indian emigrants to Surinam were from this (the Bhojpuri-speaking) region. Arya's work, *Ritual Songs and Folksongs of*

the Hindus of Surinam (1968) includes texts (primarily of Bhojpuri songs), some description of the ritual contexts in which they are sung, and discussion of the continuities between certain formal aspects of the song texts and Sanskrit literature. I discuss Arya's interpretation of the ritual importance of song later.

17. A large circular brass tray in which food is served.
18. Wife of a Koirī ('vegetable cultivator caste').
19. Name of the bride.
20. Wife of a Teli ('oil presser caste').
21. This refers to the process of purifying an area of ground or floor by sweeping it with cow dung plaster, which picks up the dust and ritually purifies the area.
22. My regular informants could not comprehend these utterances which I inadvertantly failed to check with the original singers.
23. Literally, 'juicy.' According to the native esthetic it might be crudely translated 'healthy-looking and vibrant.'
24. Forehead ornament worn by women.
25. This song is also used to invoke supernatural entities by the *ojhā* ('shaman') in the curing and divining rites he performs. In this case the spirit invoked is an aspect of the mother goddess.
26. The tree *neuclea cadamba*.
27. "A good and virtuous Daitya king," who among other things defeated Indra. He was the son of Prahalad. (Dowson 1972: 42).
28. A kind of plant unknown to informants.
29. A *cauk* sanctifies the ground, converting it into a sacred place for the duration of the ceremony (Arya 1968: 14).
30. A man's skirt-like garment, part of which is passed between the thighs and tucked in behind.
31. *Grahan* (the Hindi word for the Bhojpuri *garahanavā*) refers to the eclipse of sun or moon which is, according to mythology (the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and perhaps elsewhere), the seizure and swallowing of the sun or moon by the demon-god Rahu (Dowson pp. 114: 252-53). My informant suggested that *kaṣṭ* ('distress') was the gloss needed in this context.
32. *Amstenyhad polyhismus*.
33. The part of the sari used to cover the head and face.

34. The blouse-like garment worn underneath the sari which covers the breasts and leaves the midriff bare.
35. The lower part of the sari.
36. A bathing spot on the Ganges in Varanasi.
37. There are a great variety of songs and melodic and textual variants even within a small area, e.g., a block (the smallest governmental administrative unit), and a *fortiori* an amazing abundance of songs and variants within a district.
38. The hyperbole with which these subjects are treated in the wedding of Sita and Rama, as depicted in Tulsi Das' *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Rāmcārītmanas* are indicative of their importance in the folk mind. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is the best well known epic in India.

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Brenda E. F. Beck

A PRAISE-POEM FOR MURUGAN

*Translated with the
assistance of R.
Balako Rao*

Murugan is a very popular god in the Tamil-speaking areas of India today. The many references to Murugan found in the earliest literature of this region make it clear that he was also a prominent deity in earlier times. He is the object of many contemporary festivals, and huge numbers of worshippers make him the focus of their personal devotions. Indeed, pilgrimage to and worship at Murugan temples have increased rapidly in recent years. The deity's current popularity, however, cannot be explained by an upsurge of regional sentiment that has taken some ancient god as its symbol. Rather, Tamilnad has exhibited a continuous tradition of Murugan worship in which repeated cycles of excitement can be observed.

Most Hindu gods have many names. Known elsewhere as Skanda or Kārttikeya, the specific term Murugan is found only in the South. Despite the differences in nomenclature, however, this deity is known everywhere as the second son of Śiva, the younger brother of Gaṇeś, and the beloved child of the Krittika maidens (the Pleiades) who raised him. Admittedly, Murugan is better known in South India, where his worship can be seen everywhere. In the North this deity is not commonly found in temples, though his mythological importance is certainly pan-Hindu.

One of the most interesting aspects of the South Indian Skanda (as opposed to the Northern version) is that he has two wives. The first, Devanai, is known in both North and South. But Valli, his second spouse, is given prominence only in the Tamil and Sinhalese-speaking areas.¹ In Southern temples Murugan is commonly depicted standing between his two wives, with Devanai on his left and Valli on his right. In poster art the pattern is similar. Popular iconography shows Murugan astride his peacock mount, with his right arm around Valli's waist and his left arm around Devanai's. Since right is generally more prestigious, the normal ranking of first and second spouse seems to have been reversed.² In the early literature, pre-dating any extensive Sanskrit influence, Valli was Murugan's only wife.³ And if one is to go by the devotional literature, she remains his favorite wife to this day. Perhaps this favoritism, added to the weight of Valli's historical claim to priority, explains this surprising arrangement.

The poem which follows is a good example of the extensive local literature that has grown up around the Murugan-Valli love story. In some ways, this literature can be thought of as the Tamil Śaivite equivalent to the better-known Vaiṣṇava literature treating Krishna's romance with Rādhā. Valli is second to Devanai very much as Rādhā is second to Rukmanī. And yet it is Valli, just as Rādhā, who has become the subject of a great

profusion of popular poetry, drama and dance. Why, however (at least in the case of Devanai), does a lack of emphasis in the literature contrast with her relative prominence in iconography? This interesting question will be raised again in the conclusion.

There are a few further introductory points to be made concerning style, authorship and audience. The poem itself is available in cheap paperback format. It was published by a firm in Madras city that devotes itself almost entirely to folklore and various other aspects of popular culture.⁵ It is the kind of pamphlet sold by itinerant merchants who travel from one festival or fair to another throughout the South. Sometimes such literature, of which this pamphlet is only one example, is also found in bookstalls near popular temples or in the smaller bookshops in cities and towns. This particular edition sells for 75 paise or three quarters of a rupee, while the range of cost for devotional pamphlets is from about 10 paise to two rupees. These "books" are generally not found in larger, more "academic" bookstores, partly because of their low cost and partly because of their "popular" nature.

The company which printed the particular pamphlet translated here would not divulge the precise source of its manuscripts to this author. Repeated inquiries uncovered only a vague statement from the current manager. He says that his company has inherited a large body of materials (on palm leaves) from a deceased local poet and that they have been gradually reissuing the works that were in his library. A close comparison of other material printed by the same company with oral versions tape-recorded directly from a still-practicing (and illiterate) bard in the Coimbatore District yields very extensive parallels. Hence we may suspect that this poem, as the other things published by this company, bears a close resemblance to the extant oral tradition more generally.

The verse style used in the poem is not sophisticated. There are grammatical irregularities, as well as some spelling mistakes and missing words. The ideas are sometimes not stated very clearly, and there are numerous insertions of Sanskrit words where Tamil ones would have done at least as well. In all these ways, this poem appears to be the work, not of a scholar, but of a local poet. In its initial praise of Vinayakar (Ganesh), Saraswati and Krishna, the composer has followed a standard and very traditional style. In the dialogue of the middle section, however, the work becomes much freer in form and more colloquial. The entire story is told in a poetic metre, set by the bard in the fourth line, where he begins with *Tanay tana*.

The work also includes a considerable amount of information on caste and social custom. The importance of personal ancestry is stressed as is the importance of whom one eats with. Murugan, for example, at one point tries to calm Valli by saying, "Have you ever seen me eat in anyone else's house?" There are also references to dowry, to material comfort, and to cleanliness as additional signs of social rank. Furthermore, there are certain assumptions made about the position of additional wives. Early in the poem Murugan openly tells Valli, "She [Devanai] became my wife before you did. Being polite to her is the right thing for me to do.

Diplomatically that is correct and, moreover, for (smooth) family life that is the correct way." Valli knows that her status is secondary and accepts it. All these themes we know to be in accord with current social custom.

This poem should thus be taken as one example of the very extensive body of literature in Tamil that exalts Murugan's courtship with and marriage to Valli. Such printed poems are read mostly by local devotees. However, a work like this may also be purchased by a practicing bard, or by the organizer of local drama troupe. Such a person would use it to brush up on details and might later incorporate whatever appealed to him into his own live performances. In this sense no firm line between oral tradition and this kind of recorded literature can be drawn.⁶

On Murugan

In Ecstatic Praise

In Praise of the Guru (Murugan)⁷

Let the great ferocious elephant-faced god with five hands
Protect from obstacles and enable Cittiyānanta to sing in *sindhu*⁸
The praise of Murugan who rides the victorious peacock.

Ecstatic Refrain

Tānā, tānā tanta nānā -- tanta tānā tānā nātanta nānā.

The Poem

Murugan, full of praise
Lives in the hearts of Valli and Devānai.
The world praises him forever.

By Vināyakkar's grace obstacles are overcome.
So as to reach Him who climbs on the dancing peacock,
May Murugan's grace be enhanced by this song of praise.

Let Saraswati lend me poetic style,
I ask for Saraswati's blessing of my song
So that I can reach the feet of Murugan.
Let all the capable bards of this world
Gain success through their praise of Murugan.

This song is recited with the grace of Krishna
For Murugan, whose fame spreads in all directions and forever.

[Omission of further lines of simple praise.]

After bathing in the Ganges,
Murugan took the sharp *uzi*,
And eagerly searching for his Kuravar flower,¹⁰
Went into her house.

Valli saw Murugan and said,
"Welcome my husband."

And with hands like those of a red lotus she lovingly embraced him.
She put his ornaments back where they had slipped to one side and said,
"You are very sweet to me, and pleasantly unpredictable too.
You have taken pity and faithfully come to me;
You are the pearl which your mother bore;
You are my king."

As the lady praised him like this, he responded,
"Honey, beautiful deer of the upland forest."

And he embraced Valli.

Looking at her he said,
"My sweet-voiced lady, with a tone more lovely than a *calataram*
instrument,¹¹
Oh you with eyebrows like Indra's bow,
You who agreed to marry me,
You who are a good companion for Indra's daughter Dēvānai,
I have stayed too long.
My lady Dēvānai will be searching for me,
So please give leave to go."

The flower-like Valli said,
"My master, that is a lot of hollow praise.
What kind of talk is this about leaving me?
Go and order that woman (but don't order me.)
Do you have no courage in her house?
If you stay here for two days, what will you lose?
When you are in my house, why should she search for you?
I can not bear it.
Tell me the truth."

Murugan answered,
"Valli, my dear,
If I stay here, Dēvānai's servant ladies, not knowing where I am,
will search everywhere,
So leave me to go."

Valli, whose waist was as thin as a belt of lightning, responded,
"My lord, what is your hurry?
You could stay here tonight and go tomorrow.
I will not let you go at any cost,
I will not leave you.
I am not afraid of your first wife."

Let Dēvanai search and come here."
She said that and extended her hand, hoping he would take it.

But even without looking, Murugan scolded her saying,
"Why should you be angry?
Even ten million ladies cannot equal Dēvanai.
Of my own accord I favored her with marriage when she was of the
right age;
And furthermore, she became my wife before you did.
For these two reasons being polite to her is the right thing for
me to do.
Diplomatically that is correct, and moreover, for (smooth) family
life
That is the correct way.
Dēvanai, not knowing I am here, will be searching.
Let me take leave."

On listening to this our flower-like Kuravar lady was shocked, and in
anger said,
"Having come from a rich family, has Dēvanai become your favorite
and I only a kept woman who stole into her life?
Did we play a foul game?
Did you marry me without the knowledge of others?
Do the people of your caste humiliate you (on account of me)?
Why do you come stealthily to my house?
Has not Dēvanai known about us from the very beginning,
when you loved me very much and came to see me?
Ask Narathar,¹² who brought you to me;
He helped you in the forest near that lake frequented by bears
and tigers.
Ask your brother Ganapati (Ganesh);
He will also swear on the legality of our marriage in front of
Siva's temple.
Just because you married Dēvanai in Siva's temple,
Does this make her special?
Did I not also do penance for you?"

To this Murugan laughed and said,
"Do not shout like a culprit
Do not try to hide your dirty Kuravar caste background.
Oh girl of the bee caste,¹³ it is not proper to talk against
your husband.
Who came to you in spite of our telling the world that having
two wives is incorrect.
Let's stop; I'll come back.

As he said this she jumped in his way and said,
"Why do you speak with such harsh words?
You may leave only after explaining this to me.
You'll see my cleverness now."

She tied up her sari, as if for a fight, and lovingly approached him;

On seeing this Murugan said,
"Stay away from me;
I'll explain."

Valli replied,
"What is there to explain?
I have known all along.
All right, let us see what happens from here on.
How wise you are we will find out
When we ask the gods in assembly."

Murugan replied,
"Well then, you try it in the court of the gods.
The gods know all about your family's status
and about the fields where you lived.
Oh beautiful painting, you ask for my guarantee.
Do you have a written guarantee to show me?¹⁴
I will not write any agreements;
Valli, I will not run behind you to do your bidding.
Do not try to push me aside and bypass me."

Valli replied,
"Why are these hugs and kisses bitter for you now?
When we were alone in the forest in the evenings,
You used to look at me and say,
Your lips, are they sweet honey or a sugar crystal?
Did you not say all these things (to me)?
Has the old sweetness gone now?
Has your first wife become (sweet like) sugar now?
Why do you scold me, my lord?
Why do you insult my caste?
Did my father disturb your peace?
Did our caste people eat daily in your place and ruin you?
Have there been any complaints about us?
My lord, is there any caste which does not have shortcomings?
Apart from the ornaments my father gave me on the day of our
marriage.
Do I have any of the other nine gems to decorate my *rudraksha*?"¹⁵

As the lady said these things Murugan answered,
"How come you talk so much?
What shortcoming do you see in my caste?
Do not talk as if you were the daughter of Kubernan.¹⁶
Do not mention to others your father's wedding gifts.
Do you think the people in the assembly do not already know?
Does not the whole world know about it?
Apart from the dress you are wearing, did you once have anything else?
Apart from tarnished copper plates¹⁷ and black beads, what did
you have?
When you followed me, you did not have silk clothes.¹⁸
You had a dress which was not washed by the washerman;
Your hair had never seen oil bought from a decent merchant.

Your body was covered with dust as thick as an oil cake.
Because of rolling in the forest your body was scratched by
thorns and twigs.
You were always eating twigs and roots;
Did I not know your status even then when you followed me?
You came as soon as I called.
I gave you nice ornaments, beautiful clothes, a pearl-like palace
And assigned you lotus-like servants to do your bidding.
I believed you and did all this.
You have forgotten all that and are insulting me without con-
sideration.
Don't say things without fully understanding (my position).
What sort of foolishness is this?
Being fully aware of the ways of Kuravar people, (I say the
following):
They drink *carayam* and *kaLLu*¹⁹ and will fight anywhere;
Without any sense of decency they make noise and mistake cats
for noisy rabbits;
They kill and eat them.
These are the things and learnt in the Kuravar's hovels.

At this Valli got terribly angry and said,
"Is it correct to speak in such a pompous way?
Who is the one who eats bones and other things in the cremation
ground?
Who ate the leftovers of Kannappa Nayanar?²⁰
Did not Siva kill a young boy as food?²¹
Have you lost your senses?
Oh my lord, who is praised in all eight direction,
How could you agree to marry a girl from the Kuravar caste?"

Murugan answered,

"The Kuravars are overcrowded because of their big families;
They will borrow if they don't have cash,
They will take loans,
And in pledge a man will give his own wife;
And the Kuravar who accepts the pledge will beget five or six
children on her.
The Kuravar who pledged the woman will later return the money
And get back his wife along with her children;
And the wife will return as if she was a chaste woman.
Does such a thing happen anywhere else in the world?
Oh curvacious Valli, is there any insult worse than this?"

After the peacock-riding god had said this, Valli replied,
"My lord, you are insulting me as a Kuravar lady.
Through the sage Agastir I know a little about you too.
Did you forget, or did you never know?
Did your father not marry the daughter of a hunter?"²²
Nandi has borne witness to the fact that your Siva, with great
pleasure, carried a woman on his head.²³
I will not speak unjustly.

The whole world ridiculed your father
For lifting his goat's legs (alternately dancing legs);²⁴
Did not your mother have a shepherd lover?²⁵
The ignominy of your mother's brother, on account of his
thousand eyes,
Was it not because of his lust for a woman.²⁶
Is it not because no one would give a girl to your brother
that he, of big stomach, sits on the riverbank?²⁷
While your brother was playing on the drum,
While your brother-in-law was clapping in harmony,²⁸
All the gods gathered and were laughing
While the Brahmans and the ladies were feeling shocked;
Did your mother not dance in front of the gods like a prostitute?²⁹
Oh lord, who blesses the poets, will not those who learn of this
laugh?
Did your father not run in fear of Pasmāsura?³⁰
Was Siva not left without wealth?
And did he not become a beggar?
Oh you, who blessed Agastir?³¹

Murugan replied,

"My loving Valli of the South,
You are a thief from the Kuravar caste who is robbing this area.
Knowing the Kuravar caste, I am going to tell you about it; listen:
In a festival where people are gathered in great numbers,
When all the noisy people are sleeping.
Without any guilt feelings,
The Kuravars will lie with the crowd
And without sleep they will remove people's jewelry and run.
On seeing this the wealthy people catch them and tie them by
their hair to a pole;
They will remove the female's sari and beat her severely.
Even then the Kuravars will not agree to their guilt;
They are not ashamed of being beaten."

Valli answered the lord saying,

"Oh peacock-riding lord, worshipped by devotees,
I will tell you about the greatness of your caste.
I will identify it, listen:
Who is the one who lived in the hamlet of the shepherds
And stole butter from their pots?³²
If someone mentioned the fact that Yasoda,³³ along with other
women, saw this one day
And that she tied Krishna to a grinding stone with a rope used
to tie cows,
Would this not make you ashamed?
Did he not steal some ladies saris once?
In a fierce battle, did not Krishna graze horses for Vijāyan,³⁴
And did not Krishna accept all the gruel that was given to him
And graze the cows of the town?
In your family there are a lot of ridiculous incidents;
I am even embarrassed to narrate them."

On listening to this, Murugan stretched out his hand and said,
"Valli, in your mountain country
This is how you build your house:
You just set two pillars upright and tie them together with ropes;
To prevent the rain from soaking everything, you put bamboo
branches on top.
There are no side walls;
One cannot sleep well because of the continuous murmuring;
The goats will be grazing inside and causing a nuisance.
Even five people will not fit in such a house;
The front door will never be closed.
Even if you try to close the door,
There will always be a leak or two in the ceiling.
Things you have never wanted, you will find them in such a house
And the lamp there, it will be barely visible.
You can never believe such a house;
You can never make such people sit in one place;
They will always be doing something annoying.
They sing their Kuravar songs and accept gruel for that.
Their religious devotion is stored away in the attic;
They do not have any inhibition."

As Murugan said this Valli answered,
"The Kuravars have a small hut for themselves;
They live on their own.
No one can find fault with that,
But you do not have a place.
You keep running from mountain to mountain;
You do not even have a half a penny.
Since you have no way of building a house to live in
And because you suffer from the summer sun, the rain and the cold,
The people of the world take pity on you
And build a nice temple for you.
They make gold ornaments for you;
They consider you as Vadivella³⁵
And keep you in a sacred place.
This is the good work of your devotees;
It is not correct that you are in a beautiful temple?
Yet the chariot, the elephant and the horse are all borrowed;
All the ornaments made of the nine jewels that are on you are
borrowed.
Are not all these things the property of others?
Do not think unnecessarily of humiliating the Kuravar's homes.
Is not all that you own a single victory spear?
What other wealth do you have?
Maccamunni³⁶ has spoken through the Vedas about your group.
Listen to this:
Your cross-cousin is a learned Brahman;³⁷
Your mother's brother is a fellow who tried to measure the
world;³⁸
Your mother was a milk-vending Padayācci.³⁹
Her dear brother was raised by a shepherd;"⁴⁰

Your grandfather was a fisherman;⁴¹
Your general was from the fighting race;⁴²
When did a king give birth to you?⁴³
Your relations make up an ill-defined group;
They come from a mixture of castes.
If I had known this before, would I have accepted you?
Could anything have been done about it?
We belong to the Kuravar caste.
What sort of intelligent act was it that you came to my *parani*?⁴⁴
And bragged that you are a Paravan?⁴⁵
Have you forgotten that you begged me for some millet flour?
Had it not been for the fact that you changed your appearance
completely
And came as a mad elephant who had lost his way,
I would not have yielded to your falsehood.
You came to me as a hunter and begged me and said you were tired;
You speak to me like this only after you have achieved your purpose.
Did I come voluntarily?
Your words are deceitful
Even if it is the *kali yuga*, you should not go back
On the promises you so tirelessly made.
My lord, who was conceived by my mother-in-law with golden legs,
When I ask you to remain with me every day,
Is it proper to insult my caste?
The world will not accept it.
Dēvānai has told you to insult me like this.
Somehow some rascal has told you all these lies.
There is no place in the world you have not been.
Who has poisoned you like this?
Did you not catch the names of the ladies who told you all this?
Tell me who gave you a feast?
Just wait awhile --
I'll bring her here by her hair.
If it is not due to being poisoned,
Then you would not reply to my questions like this.
Oh my maids with pearl bracelets,
Go and bring him of the pearl *lingam*.⁴⁶
It appears that Murugan has been drugged.
My husband needs a little check-up."

As Valli said this, Murugan, who had listened to these strange words,
replied softly:

"Why are you unnecessarily worried?
Have you even seen me eating in somebody else's house?
Sweetheart, since you went against my orders and answered back,
I have scolded you and nothing else.
Oh, my beautiful peacock's tail, would I speak harshly?
Valli, my lady, don't worry.
As I said before, and you know very well,
I will go and come back.
Valli, I will show my presence here daily.

While I am telling you all this,
Searching for Murugan in the temple and not finding him,
Dēvānai will be sad and will be saying:
 'Ladies, would you please go and search for Murugan, who
 went to Manikagangai and has not come back;
 Go and come back here immediately.'
The servant maids will all go and search for Murugan at Manikagangai.
They will ask, 'Did you see Murugan?
 The lady with the forehead shaped like the half moon is
 searching for her lost husband
 Oh *munivars*,⁴⁷ did you see our Murugan?
 Please tell us.
 Oh people who have brought gifts,
 Did you see the husband of our beautiful Dēvānai,
 Who came to Manikagangai for bathing?
 Did you see him here?
 Where else could we look?'
The servant maids search all along the river,
While the temple servants search all through the streets.
On seeing these longing people and knowing by her mind reading
 where her lord is,
Dēvānai will send an army to find me and take me home.
Oh lady with a lovely bust,
Please give me leave."

As he said this, Valli was surprised and laughed. She answered,
 "I will beat the people who come in search of you.
 Even if that Dēvānai comes, I will fight with her.
 What right does she have to search for my husband?
 You are asking leave to run away.
 Lord, what is this all about?

To Valli, who had said this, Murugan responded by approaching and flattering her by saying,
 "My own deer,
 Don't unnecessarily become cross with me.
 Would I wrong you?
 Lady, don't worry.
 Would I forget you?
 I will go now;
 Valli please understand and give me leave to go to Dēvānai.
 Say that with your own mouth, and say it with pleasure?"

When the spear-carrying one begged like this, Valli was very pleased and said,
 "Oh spear-carrying god whom the Vedas praise,
 Oh my lord, one with honorable qualities,
 Go without sadness,
 You worthy son of the Lord (Śiva)."

Saying this, Valli walked with the spear-carrying lord (to the door).

The lord, elegant as a painting, went (out) and here the servant maids
who had come looking for him prostrated at his feet.
On seeing this act of reverence, the spear-carrying lord was overcome
with feeling;
He saw Dēvānai in front of him and went to her saying boldly,
"Oh woman, why should you search for me?
I went to the house of Valli,
My lady with lotus legs.
Oh lady Dēvānai,
How do you explain searching for me?"

The lady prostrated at the flower feet of Murugan and said,
"Oh my husband who has the praiseworthy spear.
Is this the only thing you have to do daily?
Oh lord, how come you have so much love for her and not for me?
Is being faithful (towards her) an undying feast for you?
Do you have to go to her house daily on your own accord?
Because of you there has been only humiliation here.
Even if one deviates from the caste rules
And marries in a low Kuravar group,
Must a yogi fall from his dignity?
If you go often to her house, she will talk to you happily;
But she does not even belong to a high class.
Since Valli belongs to the Kuravar caste, I can tell you this.
Believe me,
Are you enchanted by the love of Valli?
Are you so overcome with joy that you are not able to shake
yourself out of this?
Engrossed in Valli's love, you are speaking (like this).
Which fort (of yours) have I taken that I have become a burden
to you?
Will not the world notice the (lack of) eagerness with which you
come to me?
You have lost all you possessed (by this).
My lord, you went there to eat Valli's millet flour.
Oh young lord who has the blessings of Lord Śiva,
I do not understand your mind."

As she said this, our six-faced god convincingly replied,
"My dear,
I had your promise and only after that I married Valli and brought
her here.
Honey, there is no mistake on my part.
Do you know this?
Speaking unnecessarily is a nuisance.
You go home."
Our Murugan said this, climbed on the throne, and with a cock in
one hand,⁴⁸ our lord as pretty as a painting sat there.
On that day thousands of devotees came for *tīvartanai*.⁴⁹
The devotees prostrated and sang in praise
and decorated the Lord with garlands of poetry.

As the lord sat on his throne a dense crowd gathered singing,
"Victory to the Lord!"

The son of Siva, the six-faced god,
blessed the people with love, saying
"Without bad fate following you,
You should all live happily."

All the gods and human beings who had assembled there went back to
their places (of residence).

With the grace of Murugan who helped with this good Tamil (poem),
The yogi's prostrate to him daily and nothing goes unfulfilled.
Even if one mentions the name of Murugan, there will be no poverty.
Blessed be the gods and the yogis;
Blessed be Vishnu, Siva and Pārvati;
Blessed be the orators and poets;
Blessed be this poem, which is about the husband of Valli,
Blessed be Murugan of the spotted peacock.
Let these blessings and praise be for the people of the cities all
through the world.

Blessed be Murugan forever,
He who lives blissfully with Valli and Dēvānai.

Commentary (concluded)

The above poem raises a number of interesting questions about the general position of Murugan and his wives in the Southern Saivite pantheon. Why, for example, is Murugan openly acknowledged to have two wives? This is particularly striking since the god himself claims that he explicitly advised his devotees that they should have no more than one. Why, furthermore, in a poem that is intended to praise Murugan, should he be described as having a bitter fight with his junior wife, Valli? And finally, why should Valli be given so much extra prominence vis-à-vis Dēvānai in literary compositions, whereas in the iconographic tradition Valli and Dēvānai are always shown in parallel and together? These three questions will be the focus of the following discussion.

In the text of the poem Murugan admits openly that he approached Valli and requested that she marry him as second wife, despite his having told his own devotees earlier that they should have only one. A general explanation for this seeming inconsistency must certainly include the fact that the gods of Hinduism are often depicted as great precisely because they can transgress or transcend the norms that remain operative for lesser beings. Why, however, transgress the particular rule of having a single marital partner? The answer seems to lie in the fact that, for Hindus, the love that exists between man and wife is understood to illustrate and even exemplify the quality of love between man and god. Murugan has two wives because the two symbolize two different aspects of such love or two different paths to union with God.

To use Tamil words to describe this difference, the first wife (Dēvānai) represents *karpū*, meaning chastity or love arising from

marriage, hence social obligations and formal relationships in general. Valli, the second wife, on the other hand, represents *kaḷavu* or love before marriage, hence the direct attainment of a higher state of existence, without regard for restraining social norms. Valli, the second wife (as Dēvānai is quick to point out) is dangerous to her husband's reputation. By extension, she can be seen to endanger the cultural order in general. It is appropriate, for this reason, that Valli be of low caste relative to Murugan's first wife,⁵⁰ and that her community be described as lacking in embarrassment and in inhibition generally.

Another interpretation of the significance of Murugan's two wives could be put forth. This would be to suggest that the presence of Dēvānai (a Brahman) and Valli (a Vēṭṭuva) are intended to convey the message that the experience of love for god is open to members of all castes equally, be they high or low. This understanding of the threesome, at a social level, does not rule out the presence of a second layer of religious symbolism as well. Any man may approach divinity through approved, ceremonial channels, or he may take the path of direct, unrestrained affect or passion. This latter opposition, which pertains to the human condition in general rather than to a particular social structure, is the level of interpretation dealt with in this essay. If Dēvānai represents the conventional, controlled, ritualized approach to worship, Valli represents the path of ecstasy and self-abandonment. Self-abandonment, in Hinduism, is associated with lack of control, and consequently with danger and defilement in general. Hence, the appropriate choice of a low-caste female to symbolize this fearful yet pleasurable and important type of religious experience.

Valli and Dēvānai, furthermore, are said to have been younger and elder sisters respectively in a former birth.⁵¹ It is well-known that younger sisters can be given more freedom in their marriages than elder ones, since once the first is established, the second cannot injure her reputation. The marriage with Dēvānai thus represents a divine state achieved through respect for the cultural rules. Marriage is symbolic of this more general order. It is achieved by respect for rules rather than by their circumvention. The marriage with Valli, on the other hand, represents the direct attainment of a divine union by a transgression of the normal rules of behavior.⁵² This second kind of love, or *kaḷavu*, may be the more attractive and the more engrossing of the two. But the second, by logic, cannot exist without the first. One must establish what the social norms and constraints are before they can be deliberately circumvented.

Secondly, given Valli's special, premarital love relationship with Murugan, why does she proceed to fight with him? This seemingly surprising aspect of the poem must be understood in terms of an explicit tradition of praise-by-blame that exists throughout Saivite devotionism more generally. The fight, in general, serves as a pretext for the poet to make deprecating comments about Murugan, using Valli as his spokesman. This pattern, particularly common in literature about Śiva, involves the listing of various shocking traits in order to illustrate how far above the mundane human condition the god in question really is.⁵³ In this poem, the blame-praise

style normally associated with Sīva has simply been transferred to his son Murugan. Even in this poem, most of Valli's critical comments refer not to Murugan but to Sīva himself. The suggestion is simply that the activities of the father must necessarily reflect upon the son. Valli, for example, complains that Murugan comes from a mixed-caste background, that his father haunted graveyards, that he once demanded the sacrifice of one of his devotee's own sons, that his mother danced like a prostitute, that his uncle (Vishnu) measured the world with his strides, and so forth. All of these accusations indirectly heap praise on Murugan by illustrating his connection with his kinsmen's divine, rather than human, activities.

The argument in question starts with Murugan's reminding Valli of her low-caste background. This gives Valli the opportunity to retort that he is "even lower" than she is. He has no home at all, no vestige of self-respect, and so forth. Valli can at least claim something, however small, on these counts. Hence the maximum blame-praise effect is achieved. Murugan is worse even than a low-caste, uninhibited woman. Valli is the ideal mouth-piece for such blame-praise because she is of a lower caste than his proper wife, Devānai. She is, hence, expected to be forthright and open in her expressions of emotion. However, there is even a third reason. It is precisely Valli's relationship to Murugan that is supposed to be unorthodox and that is supposed to transcend the normal rules of decency. Certainly an argumentative, blaming wife goes against the orthodox Hindu view of proper behavior.

It is also important to note the theme of madness that runs through the entire poem. Being demented or crazy is, of course, widely associated with being possessed by a god. And both are equated with a state of abandonment vis-a-vis an object of love. Hence Valli asks Murugan, "Did I come (to you) voluntarily?" And then later in the same speech she suggests that Murugan must be drugged. Devānai confirms this state of mutual abandonment, chiding Murugan by taunting, "Are you so overcome with joy that you are not able to shake yourself loose of this?" Engrossed in Valli's love you are speaking (like this)."

This same idea of possession and madness in the relationship between Murugan and Valli is further elaborated by the several references to thieving and to disguise. Murugan twice calls Valli a thief, once referring to the habits of her kinsmen, and once to her direct action on his emotions when he says, "You are thief from the Kuravar caste who is robbing this area." Valli, in the same vein, reminds Murugan of his own use of deception when he came to her field hut to request shelter. Furthermore, one of Murugan's names, Kumaran, means equally "oracle" or "possession." Indeed Murugan can be said to take on a form of disguise when he possesses a person, as frequently happens in village ceremonies. Hence we can see the extensive associations of this particular deity with concealment and masquerade.

The same tradition is also familiar to worshippers of Krishna. Indeed, Vaisnavite poets have often called this deity "the thief of hearts." But the parallel that will perhaps go unrecognized is the prominence of love-fight in the descriptions of both Krishna's and Murugan's courtship. In

both cases the quarrel is used as a device to enhance the attraction of lover and beloved and to praise by inversion or seeming blame. A short example, taken from the poems of Vidyapati, should make this affinity of the two traditions more vivid.

Having come, Madhava opened the door of the room in which Radha was resting.

In her anger on account of drowsiness she looked with a suppressed smile at (him; her face) looked as if a half of the moon had risen (above the sky).

Radha began to bewail and speak to Madhava

Who, in youth, beauty, accomplishment or in any other quality, is superior to me? Who is the girl who is more accomplished than myself?

"I delayed at Mathura." Then why did you not send a messenger?

"There I met some traders and fell asleep." Your mind is fickle: it is not steady: you do not assume gravity.

She cast her side-glances and with a little smile (she said) your body is black even within.⁵⁴

The erotic nature of the love-fight is also recognized by the Tamil *Tirukkural*, a very early collection of moral aphorisms. In the very last chapter of the third part of this work, the heroine reasons, "His love will increase though it may (at first seem to) fade through the short-lived distress caused by (my) dislike."⁵⁵ Her point is equally granted by modern poets.

Another interesting dimension to the poem is its relation to Claude Lévi-Strauss' recent work on themes in the mythology of the New World. His work suggests the important role of cooked food in opposing a state of nature to that of culture. He further develops this idea by distinguishing a restricted domain, devoted strictly to cooking, from its peripheries. The latter consists both of what is food but remains uncooked (honey), and the remains of what was cooked but never became food (ashes). These two substances, because they have to do with the boundary between nature and culture, are often associated with mythical heroes in the native American materials Lévi-Strauss has studied. It is intriguing to note, therefore, the prominence of the same symbolism surrounding the South Indian stories about the god Murugan. Valli's association with wild honey, for example, is very strong. She is the girl of the "bee caste," by Murugan's own words. And both the communities with which she is associated in the literature (the Kuravar and VeTar/VeTTuvar) are traditionally honey-gatherers by occupation. Another wild, sweet food is also important here, for the name Valli itself refers to the sweet potato. Indeed, Valli is said to have been born of a forest deer in a depression left by an uprooted tuber of this type.⁵⁶ Devānai, by contrast, was born in heaven and is said to have come forth from the womb of a white elephant.⁵⁷ There is a clear opposition here of the two wives in terms of "below" versus "above," of "outside" versus "inside" normal caste society, and of "human" versus "Divine" origins. Devānai's name itself is explained by devotees as being a combination of the terms *dēvi* (goddess) and *anai* (elephant), while Valli's birth from a deer and early years with low-caste human parents indicate her more humble origins. Furthermore,

Dēvanai's wedding took place at the famous shrine of Tiruparankundram in a culturally central locale, while Valli was married in a small VēTTuva village in a marginal area. Dēvanai's color is gold, the color of a substance valued for its connections with wealth and high status, while Valli's color is the purple of the never-fading jasmine of the forest.⁵⁸

While Valli is clearly associated with honey, an uncooked natural food, she is also associated with wild millet. Indeed, Murugan is said to have asked her for a meal of honey mixed with millet flour when he appeared to her as a beggar. Valli is still said to highly value these particular foods as offerings in her temple. Murugan and Dēvanai, by contrast, prefer to dine on cooked (boiled) *ponkal* rice. Hence one wife can be seen to represent the periphery (and natural) end of the food spectrum, the other the central portion of that spectrum which is cooked (boiled) and which Lévi-Strauss has suggested is a symbol of culture par excellence.

Murugan himself, however, partakes of both ideas, just as he appears in the iconography with one wife on either side. He is at once the spear-carrying warrior, associated with kingly rule and with the defence of human culture, and the ash-covered ascetic who wanders in the hills. It is in the latter guise that he is linked to Valli, to *kaḷavu*, and to the honey/ash imagery that lie at the periphery of human affairs.

Why, finally, is Valli's marriage to Murugan so celebrated in local poetry while Dēvanai's is neglected, and yet the latter present equally with Valli in any temple ceremony? All this is indicative, it would seem, of the opposition that the two wives are intended to symbolize. Dēvanai is the necessary and proper wife. She must be there and she must receive recognition at any formal event. Iconography (as opposed to the illustration of a particular story) is formal, ceremonial, or static in a similar sense. Valli, on the other hand, is the seductive unorthodox wife. She is the one associated with honey, with ecstasy, and with possession by a divine lover. The two wives are thus counterpoles, one associated with fixity or steadfastness, the other with movement. It is appropriate, therefore, that poets be given free rein to describe the latter in a fluid medium, literature. But artisans, who work with immobile substances, are expected to treat the two equally. Valli has the appeal of excitement and mystery. She represents complete devotional abandonment. But without the formal presence of Dēvanai her significance would alter.⁶⁰ Only after the correct and proper marriage has been celebrated is an additional and less orthodox union appropriate.⁶¹ As is typical of Hindu paradox, Valli would not be legitimate (at least in modern eyes) if Dēvanai did not precede her.

NOTES

1. Indeed, in the North, Murugan is commonly depicted as a fierce and solitary warrior who is without wives altogether. His elder brother Ganesh illustrates the inverse pattern, having two wives in the North while generally thought to be a bachelor by Southerners.
2. The right side of the body is generally thought to be the more auspicious in Hinduism. Furthermore, a Hindu bride generally sits to the right of her groom on the wedding days. Both these traditions would favor placing Devanai (as the first wife, rather than Valli as the second) on the right of her husband.
3. The association of Devanai with Murugan was probably a result of the general "Sanskritization" of the Tamil pantheon that took place after extended contact with Brahmins from the North had occurred. Murugan's acceptance as Siva's second son probably occurred around the same time.
4. The authors of this essay are not sure about this aspect of the Krishna-Murugan parallel. See footnote 60 for further discussion.
5. The complete reference to the pamphlet is *Katirēcan pēriḷ anantakkalippu*. Madras: R. G. Pati Company, (1963), pp. 3-23.
6. This should not be taken as a modern development. Palm-leaf manuscripts have served as repositories for popular literature for centuries. There is no reason to doubt that similar exchanges between living performers and recorded texts took place before the advent of printing.
7. When Murugan was a small boy he went around asking various gods the meaning of the sacred syllable *om*, but insulted everyone who provided an answer. Finally Siva came and asked his son for the meaning he had in mind. Murugan obliged, but made Siva sit at his feet first. Hence Murugan became known as "The Guru."
8. *Sīndhu* is a special form of song praise. Cittiyānanda is presumably the name of the poet who composed the work.
9. Murugan's spear.
10. The Kuravar are a caste of hunters who live largely in the mountain foothills.
11. Musical cups filled with varying quantities of water and played with sticks.
12. A famous go-between serving both men and the gods. He is known for creating disturbances, but these are always structured so as to serve the general good. He is said to have narrated the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

to Valmiki who later wrote it down. Naratha is also the one who brought Murugan and Valli together. Hence he is referred to as a witness.

13. A reference to the Kuravar, who, among other things, are known for collecting honey.
14. A reference to the fact that marriages are generally not recorded in India.
15. A necklace used by Saivite devotees that has important mythological connotations. It is generally made of large seeds and symbolizes the necklace of skulls worn by Siva.
16. One of the eight guardians of the world. Kubera was a king who was later elevated to the status of a god. He is particularly associated with wealth.
17. Reference unclear. Maybe some old family documents.
18. Washerman generally refuse to wash the garments of low-ranking castes such as the Kuravar.
19. Local hard liquor and local beer.
20. One of Siva's most devoted followers, considered to be a saint.
21. A reference to a story in the *Periya Puranam* where Siva asks SiruttoNia Nayanar (one of his devotees) to sacrifice his own son. Siva is disguised as a wandering saint at the time. After the sacrifice has been made, and the devotee's sincerity proven, Siva restores the child to life.
22. The term used is Malai Vetan (mountain hunter caste). It refers, presumably, to Parvati being the daughter of Himalaya.
23. Reference to Siva carrying the female Ganges in his hair. Nandi is Siva's bull, who serves as his main vehicle.
24. A play on the word *attu* which can mean both "goat" and "dance."
25. A reference to Siva as lord of beasts?
26. Indra, who was cursed to have a thousand eyes as a result of once having looked at a woman with excessive lust.
27. It is said that Vinayakkar will only consent to marry a woman as beautiful as his own mother. He sits by the riverbank waiting for one, believing that he can get a good view of the prospects by watching women bathe.

28. The reference is to Krishna.
29. Pārvati once challenged Śiva to a contest in cosmic dance.
30. An evil man who stored up lots of power through penance and then asked Śiva for the boon that anything he touched would turn to fire. Śiva granted the request, then ran from Pasmāsuran, realizing his own danger. Finally, however, he tricked Pasmāsuran into touching his own head, where upon he destroyed himself. His name is incorrectly spelled "Patmasuran" in the text.
31. A *rishi* and reputed author of several hymns in the Rig-veda. Also believed to have had an important role in the formation of the Tamil language and grammar and in introducing religious literature from the North to the South.
32. A reference to Krishna.
33. The mother of Krishna.
34. Arjuna of the *Mahābhārata*.
35. Spear-carrier.
36. Vishnu in the form of a fish.
37. Brahma.
38. A reference to Vishnu's three steps with which he traversed the cosmos.
39. A caste which farms traditionally marginal areas. A reference to Pārvati as Krishna's sister?
40. Krishna, who was secretly left with a shepherd family to avoid the wrath of the king. This man had threatened to kill him because of a fortune-teller's prediction that he would live to destroy the ruler of the kingdom into which he was born.
41. A story from the *Tiruvilaiādal* where Pārvati is cursed to be born into the family of an illiterate fisherman for not paying attention while he was trying to explain to her some of the innermost secrets of the Vedas. Śiva later captures a huge shark, saving the fishermen from danger and is offered his beautiful daughter in marriage.
42. Virabāhu, when Murugan wages war with Patmāsuran.
43. Implying that his own birth is inferior to that of his Kshatriya assistant.
44. A built-up platform where Kuravars sit with sling shots in an effort to keep birds and other animals out of the ripening millet.

45. A caste of temple priests, here meaning an ascetic, someone who owns nothing, hence implying that Murugan's own caste is ill-defined.
46. A reference to Śiva.
47. Ascetics performing penance, or other wise men meditating by the riverbank.
48. An animal especially associated with Murugan.
49. A particular kind of worship that involves waving a camphor light in front of a god.
50. Valli is said to be of the Kuravar caste. Elsewhere (in the story of their births) Valli is identified as a Veṭer or Veṭṭuvar and Devanai as a Tevar.
51. The birth story, as told in the *Kanda purāṇa*.
52. See George Hart, "Some Aspects of Kinship in Ancient Tamil Literature," paper delivered at a conference entitled "Kinship in Ancient India," Toronto, May 11-13, 1973, p. 18, for a discussion of the same idea in a different context.
53. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, in conversation, 1967.
54. From Vidyapati, *The Songs of Vidyapati*, No. 220, p. 223 as quoted in David Kinsley, "Without Kṛṣṇa There is No Song," *History of Religions*, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 165.
55. Verse 1322, Tiruvallavar, *Tirukkural*, trans. by G. U. Pope, W. H. Drew, J. Lazarus and F. W. Ellis, South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Madras, 1962. This reference was very kindly pointed out by George Hart of the University of California, Berkeley.
56. This is also suggestive of Lévi-Strauss' discussion in *Mythologiques*, Vol. 4, pp. 345-346, of the symbolism of holes plugged by tubers (especially holes in heaven) in New World material.
57. This is from the *Kanda purāṇa*'s version of Valli's and Devanai's birth.
58. From a priest at a Murugan shrine in Kannapuram Kirāmam, Coimbatore District.
59. From an assistant to the priest (above).
60. Of course Valli did exist without Devanai in the earliest Tamil literature. We have no evidence from the iconography of that period, but it does seem that Devanai was a late acquisition, historically

speaking. If this is so, it would seem to be added evidence that Tamil society was at one time much less formal and hierarchical than it is today. Perhaps an orthodox wife was not structurally required to legitimate male status and symbolize social order in that distant period, as it would seem to be needed today. A similar explanation might apply to the Bengali Vaisnavite tradition where Krishna is accompanied only by Faana (and not by his first wife Rukmini) in the temple iconography. Contemporary Bengali society is generally understood to be less formal and hierarchical than is the current social order of the South. Carole Farber, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia, kindly supplied this comparative information on temple imagery.

61. This same idea has appeared in a different context in an article by Louis Dumont entitled "Les mariages nayar comme faits indiens," *L'homme*, Vol. 1 (1961), pp. 11-36.

A FEW BENGALI VAIṢNAVA FOLK SONGS

Commentary and
translation

Two complementary ways of approaching God have been developed in Indian philosophical thinking -- the path of knowledge *jñāna* and the path of devotion *bhakti*. The first is more difficult as it emphasizes the struggle on the part of the individual for self realization whereas the second takes the grace of God for granted irrespective of the quality of the individual. Thus in the first the realization is attained whereas in the second, it is given. The *bhakti* movement elaborates the second path and essentially centers around the idea of devotion to one God, usually personalized, with innumerable manifestations. Naturally, it has a uniting force, a force trying to bring compromise between diverse, often opposite, schools of thinking regarding the nature of God. The intensity of the movement can be ascertained in two time periods in the history of the subcontinent. (a) In the South from about the seventh century to the tenth century A.D., focusing around Śaṅkarācārya, who rose to re-establish Vedic Brahmanism against the growing influence of Jainism and Buddhism, which denounced God and the scriptures dealing with it.¹ Other than the works of Śaṅkarācārya himself and his immediate followers (e.g., Rāmānujācārya and Madhwācārya) the most well-known body of literature comes from the *ālvār* saints of the Tamil country.² (b) In the North from about the fourteenth to the seventeenth century aimed implicitly against the orthodox Islamic impositions which came with the strengthening of Muslim rule in the subcontinent.³ The names of the saint-singers in the later period include many more than those of the earlier period: Vidyāpati and Candidāsa in the east, Kabīra, Tulsī, Suna, and Mīrā at the center and Nāmadeva and Tukārāma in the west are the most representative of the movement around whom a tremendous body of literature has grown and still continues to grow.

The scheme of thinking of this school of literature is very much evolutionary in nature. It recognizes God as the abstract and its manifestations in three basic points of the continua, e.g., beginning, middle, and end, in the forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahesh. These three are also known as the creator, sustainer, and destroyer respectively. Beginning, middle, and end are equated with past, present, and future in the time dimension. Since the concern for the beginning (past) and end (future) is less than the middle (present) in the life of society, the aspect of Viṣṇu is the most explored of the three in the *bhakti* literature. He takes incarnation in every age to sustain divine law and order in the world whenever such a need arises. So far ten incarnations are recognized to have taken place, i.e., Matsya (fish), Kūrma (turtle), Varāha (boar), Narasiṃha (man-lion), Vamana (dwarf), Parśhurāma, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalki.⁴ It is interesting to note that the progression in the forms of incarnation of Viṣṇu is from animal (e.g., Boar, Fish) to half animal-half human (e.g., Man-lion) to human (e.g., Rāma, Kṛṣṇa) -- another evidence of evolutionary thinking. While not losing sight of the earlier (animal and half-animal-half-human) forms of incarnation of Viṣṇu, *bhakti* literature deals largely with the later (human) incarnations in the form of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as elaborately

narrated in the *Rāmāyana* of Vālmīki and the *Bhāgavata purāna* of Vyāsadeva.⁵ However, in retelling the episodes described in the above two volumes, a very distinct process of transformation is introduced. This can be called the process of the socialization of God. This kind of socialization has taken place in other religio-philosophical thinking also, e.g., in Christianity, Christ as the Son or the Messenger of God, but this idea takes on more elaboration in Indian soil where other dimensions of social relations are also explored.⁶ All these relations between the devotee and the deity can be reduced to three basic forms: a master-servant relationship, a parent-child relationship, and a lover-beloved relationship. Man (= the worshipper) and God (= the worshipped) can be seen in either opposite of the above categories, but God is predominantly the Master, the Father, and the Lover.⁷ And of the above three aspects, his roles as master and lover are depicted most often in the literature. In the long history of the movement, these two aspects have developed their ideal associations: the picture of Rāma has developed as the perfect master versus that of Kṛṣṇa as the perfect lover. In the south where Śhaivism has taken deeper roots, Rāma shares his position with Shiva.

For the expression of the feeling of utmost intimacy and intensity, however, the lover-beloved relationship is more ideal than the master-servant relationship. The idea of fear of punishment, however light it may be by the hands of the master in a master-servant relationship, does not allow the devotee and the deity to come closer without inhibitions, whereas no such barrier exists between the lover and the beloved. This is one of the reasons why Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* literature has outgrown in volume the Rāma or Śhiva *bhakti* literature.

In a comparatively closed society as India, consummation of love (as opposed to that of marriage) is socially not accepted; hence the tension of feeling in the hearts of the lover and the beloved for one another is heightened because of the presence of this social barrier; and it becomes a challenge for their union. On the philosophical level, this barrier represents the veil of illusion arising from ignorance between man and God. Until that darkness of ignorance disappears, the realization of the divine within or without is impossible. On the poetic plane this barrier is made still more difficult to surmount: Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa is an unusual one -- she is a wife in love with another man.⁸ This relationship has the added difficulty of partners belonging to different caste groups. In essence, Rādhā has to lose so many things for her love. All these things amount to losing individual identity on the philosophical plane, where losing is the only way to gain. Most of the Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* literature, the songs selected here are from the eastern districts of Bihar. They add regional color to the Bengali *padavali* literature, which, in turn, is part of the greater *bhakti* literature of the subcontinent.⁹

What she said to her friend:

When I go to the river,
I see Beauty standing beneath the *kadamba* tree.

I keep thinking about that lovely image,
I cannot forget it.
Again and again I cry.
The wish remained in my mind,
Desire awoke in my heart.
When will I unite with him?

While coming back with water
He turns and winks at me.
Eyes and eyes,
When they meet
The moving feet cannot go forward.
The wish remained in my mind,
Desire awoke in my heart.
When will I unite with him?

At home are my in-laws.
Fear and terror possess me.
Poet Domana says,
What should I do now--
I'm like a bird inside a cage.
The wish remained in my mind,
Desire awoke in my heart.
When will I unite with him?

2

What she said to him:

I'm a woman of Braja with a family;
Why do you call me by my name?
O lowly flute,
What would you get by spoiling my honor?

Born as a simple bamboo,
How did you become so crooked?
O lowly flute,
What would you get by spoiling my honor?

Ejecting poison from the seven holes,
You inflame honorable women.
O lowly flute,
What would you get by spoiling my honor?

Playing on a high note,
You made me defamed.
O lowly flute,
What would you get by spoiling my honor?

This is the prayer of poet Durlabha:
Don't scorch honorable women.
O lowly flute,
What would you get by spoiling my honor?

3

What he said to her friends:

This boat of mine
Can take only one person
It cannot take the second.
O girls of Braja,
Listen, girls of Braja,
On this condition I'll row the boat across Yamunā.

If you want to go across,
Why is the delay?
Bring your pots with curd.
O girls of Braja
Listen, girls of Braja,
I'll take the boat across Yamunā.

Vrindā, with a smile,
Says to Kṛṣṇa,
"See that you don't drown us."
O girls of Braja,
Listen, girls of Braja,
I'll take the boat across Yamunā.

Kṛṣṇa with his hands
Took Rādhā on the boat.
Poet Jadu says, "Don't let his feet out of your hands.
O girls, of Braja,
Listen, girls of Braja,
I'll row the boat across Yamunā.

4

What the outsider said:

The impassioned women of Braja
Won't listen to any warning.
They won't count on anyone.
They all go to meet Kṛṣṇa.

By the enchanting sound of the flute
The *gopis*' hearts become spellbound
Like a snake running under a charm.
They all go to meet Kṛṣṇa.

As a new wave
Runs upsetting boats;
The women hurry through groves and forests.
They all go to meet Kṛṣṇa.

With the desire of Hari's love
They reach and surround him.
Poet Kaliya says, "They surrender in his feet."
They all go to meet Kṛṣṇa.

5

What the outsider said:

Hearing about her lover's coming,
Rādhā's heart became restless.
The lovely one is overly happy,
Tears come to her eyes out of joy
Thinking Kṛṣṇa will come to the tryst.

The darling in the kitchen
Is cooking food and curry.
Instead of putting spice in the curry,
She puts it in the rice
Thinking of Kṛṣṇa will come to the tryst.

Wearing nose ring in the ear,
Earrings on her toes,
Thus all her ornaments the lovely one
Wears in a wrong way
Thinking Kṛṣṇa will come to the tryst.

Poet Lakhan says,
O Krishna's beloved, listen,
The anklets of your feet
You have put on your neck
Thinking Kṛṣṇa will come to the tryst.

6

What she said to her friend:

To pick flowers
I went to the grove.
Suddenly in my heart
The Black Bee bit me.

The effects of the poison
Burn my heart.
Will I live or die?
The Black Bee bit me.

Poet Acaraja says,
I'm dying of the flame inside.
Hari, how will I go back home?
The Black Bee bit me.

7

What the outsider said:

All the women surrounded him,
They put him in the middle.
They look at his moon-face
With their wide eyes.
The women of Braja
Dance with what joy
Gesturing with their arms.

Nose rings swinging,
Earrings shining.
Some in white, some in yellow,
Some in blue saris,
The women of Braja
Dance with what joy
Gesturing with their arms.

Following the *rāgas* and the *rāginīs*,
Tuned with the beats and measures.
Sweeter and sweeter songs
The beauties sing.
The women of Braja
Dance with what joy
Gesturing with their arms.

With their body movements
They dance round and round.
His body drunken with emotion,
Hari is filled with joy.
The women of Braja
Dance with what joy
Gesturing with their arms.

8

What she said to her friends:

We weep in the grove
Looking for him on the path day and night.
Yet our union didn't take place.
O my friends,
Staying up all night was worthless.

Flowers, sandal paste, and garlands,
We readied them basketfuls.
What will we do with all the ornaments?
O my friends,
Staying up all night was worthless.

Poet Madanamohana says,
The heart remained in his feet.
He did not come by any means.
O my friends,
Staying up all night was worthless.

Poet Madanamohana says,
The heart remained in his feet.
He did not come by any means.
O my friends,
Staying up all night was worthless.

9

What she said to her friends:

Loving him became a burden;
I cannot forget him.

I became weak from the fire of separation.
O my friends,
Without the Dark One, my heart weeps.

This was written on my fate.
Will I ever see him again?
I stay up the whole night for nothing.
O my friends,
Without the Dark One my heart weeps.

The cuckoo is singing aloud.
The night has become morning now.
Lord, have mercy upon Poet Candana.
O my friends,
Without the Dark One, my heart weeps.

10

What she said to her friends:

I tell you, my dear,
Will you listen to me?
The Dark One didn't come back
And the month of rains is passing away.

Staring at the raindrops
Like a water-bird,
I meditated on him.
The month of rains is passing away.

What happened to my fate?
My love forgot me.
My youth is fading in vain.
The month of rains is passing away.

Fate gave me sorrow,
I'm empty of joy;
Without Hari nothing is bearable.
The month of rains is passing away.

11

What she said to her friends:

To be in love is such a pain;
A girl of honor does not know this.
Without seeing him even for a moment
I cannot stay still.
Friend, to comfort my heart
I cannot do anything at all,
To comfort my heart.

Everyone at home abuses me
Because of him.
But more painful than that
Is the flute of the Dark One.

Friend, to comfort my heart
I cannot do anything at all,
To comfort my heart.

Poet Duryodhana says,
What do you think is the answer?
How will this agony be cured?
By what medicine?
Friend, to comfort my heart
I cannot do anything at all,
To comfort my heart.

12

What she said to her friends:

Friends, the cuckoos are calling;
Spring is here.
In such a time my love
Stays in a foreign land.
Tell me, how will I sustain my life?
With new trees, creepers, and flowers
The forest is adorned;
Bees in hundreds to flowers
Run in drunkenness.
Tell me, how will I sustain my life?
Where was it, who brought it?
This high-flamed fire?
Stronger than this
Is the burning poison inside.
Tell me, how will I sustain my life?
The hope of poet Rāma's heart
Died in the heart itself.
Will he ever see
His feet?
Tell me, how will I sustain my life?

13

What her friends said to him:

Radhā's heart is considerate,
But the Crook's ways are deceitful.
Entering her heart he broke it.
Crookedness is fair only with a crook,
Simplicity with the simple minded,
So has it been said in the Veda.
What kind of love is this
Towards one's beloved?
Why are you treacherous toward Rādhā,
Not fulfilling even half of her desire?

Without food and water
How long can she live?
O utter dishonest one, listen,
You burned her putting
The fuel of passion in her.
The result: she cannot live.

O friend, there's no shame
In your shameless face.
Fie on you, we die of shame
Because of you.

When you made love to her;
You gave the moon in her hands.
You made her up with your own hands.
Now without seeing you
A heavy burden has fallen on her.
We doubt if she can see you.

We have heard in a saying,
Hari, listen!
When affection ceases,
Friends become enemies.

Witnessing this are the lotus and the sun;
When the water remains only knee-deep
And dries up, the love between them disappears.
Whatever love you let grow,
You let it burn with equal sorrow,
Making it like the withered lotus.

Poet Gaurāṅga says,
How long would one live?
O friend, the lotus-eyed
Rādhā keeps waiting forever.

14

What she said to her friends:

When it was morning,
All cowherd girls were ready:
"To sell curd,
Let's go to Honey Town
To sell curd.

"One, to sell curd,
The other, to see Hari.
In selling curd,
We'll have double profit,
In selling curd.

"Looking at his moonlike face
We'll forget all our sorrows,
Selling curd,
What joy will we have in our hearts,
Selling curd!

Poet Gaurāṅga says,
How long can we live?
Selling curd,
We'll sing the glory of Hari
While selling curd.

15

What the outsider said:

How many flowers are woven together
So beautiful to see,
Decoration over decoration.
To the temple in the grove
He is going slowly
To see Rādhā.
Disguised as a flower girl
He is going to the tryst
Calling, "Garlands for sale!"

"Come, come, come, come, flower girl,"
Calls Rādhā repeatedly.
Seating him close to her she says,
"A beautiful girl like you
I have never seen.
My eyes cannot even blink."
In disguise of a flower girl
He is going to the tryst
Calling, "Garlands for sale!"

"By your signs
I could tell it is you;
You came disguised as a girl,
O shameless friend!
You have nothing to do with garlands,"
Says Rādhā
With a little smile.
In disguise of a flower girl
He is going to the tryst
Calling, "Garlands for sale!"

They look at one another;
Both were happy
Sinking in the sea of joy.
After such a long time,
Says poet Dwija Ranga,
Desire was fulfilled.

In disguise of a flower girl
He is going to the tryst
Calling, "Garlands for sale!"

16

What she said to him:

Come, cowherd, come,
Sit on my lotus-heart.
Suck and drink the juice.
Honey bee, come!

With beautiful creepers and leaves
Its flowers are fragrant.
Drink the juice and fill your heart.
Honey bee, come!

Men are bees,
Women flowers.
You are always welcome.
Honey bee, come!

Poet Ramakṛṣṇa says,
Let your love be a secret.
Don't tell about it to anyone.
Honey bee, come!

17

What the outsider said:

The arms and legs of each
Are twined with the other;
Thus their hearts met.
Bringing face against face,
Eyes looking into eyes,
They speak a broken speech.

Rāhu, as it devours
The half moon,
So did Rādhā swallow
Half of Govinda.
As if it were a big pond
Full of honey.
In the clear water
Are so many lotuses blooming.
Over them are bees
Hovering with passion.

The Dark One is the ocean of joy,
His blue dress steals the mind;
There's nothing to equal him.
Rādhā, like a radiant lotus,
Looks extremely charming.

Both are filled with joy.
On the blooming lotus
Full of honey
The bee-king hovers around.
The nectar comes out of the lotus;
The bee drinks it
Entering deep in the pollen.

The lotus petals became loose;
The honey bee dived deeper.
In and out, again and again --
Thus the couple met.

The bee drunk with honey
Doesn't want anything else.
His heart became enticed with honey.
Finally with joy
The lotus became overwhelmed.
"Think of that!" says poet Gaurāṅgia.
The bee-king enticed with honey
Remained arrested;
Inside the lotus, the wanderer
Remained arrested.

NOTES

1. Buddha's deviation from the current Indian philosophical thinking was fundamental. He denied the existence of God and, therefore, the question of his dominance over the creation, including man, did not arise. To him, man is the highest truth. Similarly he declared the world to be real and not illusory, as the current thinkers believed. Finally he redefined the notion of rebirth; man does not have to wait until his physical death to be reborn, for he is reborn every split second. Naturally this was too much of a shock to bear for the Brahmanic thinkers of the day and, hence, the movement to save God, heaven, and the life hereafter.

2. Though the seeds of the movement were sown through the Sanskrit language (Śaṅkarācārya, Ramanujācārya, Jayadeva and others all wrote in Sanskrit), it became popular only after it adopted regional languages as its vehicles. The *ālvār* saints wrote in Tamil, Vidyapati in Maithilī, Candidasa in Bengali, Kabīrdasa in Bhojpurī, Tulasīdasa in Avadhī, Suradāsa and Mirabai in Brajabhāṣā, Namadeva and Tukarama in Marathī and so on.

3. As far as monotheism is concerned there is no conflict between Brahmanism and Islam, but whereas Brahmanism accepts idol worship as a form of approaching God, Islam does not. Also, Brahmanic order is open-ended regarding the number of messengers of God. In Islam, Mohammad is the last messenger. The Sufi order of Islam, however, is much closer to Brahmanism, particularly to the Vedantic school of thinking. For later thinkers like

Kabīra, this provided a common ground for some fusion of these ways.

4. In popular belief even Christ, Mohammad, and Gandhi are recognized as *avataras* (incarnations).

5. In retelling the stories, of course, the later poet-singers have used their poetic freedom to reinterpret some of the events narrated in both these volumes. These alterations were in accordance with the needs of the time. The character of Rama, for instance, is raised from human (of Valmiki's *Ramayana*) to super-human in all the later *Ramayanas* (e.g., that of Kamban, Tulasidāsa and Kīrtivāsa). The human weaknesses of Rama, e.g., his killings of Bālī and Jambūkā against the rules of war and his social conduct, have been resolved in such a way that the reader would not doubt the moral character of Rama. Such alterations are even more prominent in the Kṛṣṇa legend mentioned in the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. The whole character of Rādhā is a new creation; she does not even exist explicitly in the *Purāṇa*.

6. The idea of the Lord as Lover is not totally absent in Christianity. Saint John of the Cross and other Christian mystics approached God in this way, but the literature dealing with it is still very small.

7. The notion of God as mother is a later one. It grew in the eastern part of the country and gained significance in the hands of saint Rama-krishna Paramhansa of Bengal.

8. This love for the forbidden fruit is depicted elsewhere in the world literature (e.g., in Urdu and Persian literature), but its philosophical rationalization is a unique feature of *bhakti* literature.

9. The *kīrtana* style of singing and dancing is the ideal mode of presentation of these songs. Introduction, separation, and reunion of the lover (God) and beloved (individual soul) are acted out through the presentation of songs in that sequence.

10. The function of the signature of the poet is basically to inform the reader about the authorship of the song, but at times the poet seems to participate in or observe and comment on the events dealt with in the song.

Eva Friedlander

THE MUNDANE AND PROSAIC IN
BENGALI FOLK SONGS

*An analysis
of themes*

Since the time of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the folk music of Bengal has been increasingly identified with the mystical songs of the Bauls and the ethereal, plaintive strains of their one-stringed instrument, the *ektara*. The songs are said to reflect the Bengali soul and collections often focus on their spiritual and esoteric nature. A unique combination of mysticism and naturalistic imagery associated with these songs has contributed to Bengal's distinctive charm, but it has also tended to overshadow a wide variety of other folk songs, not least of all the more prosaic Baul songs. We tend, therefore, to gain an exaggerated notion of the divine, esoteric, and emotional nature of Bengali devotional folk songs. My concern in this paper is with the way a traditional folk song idiom continues to appeal to broad sectors of the population through time. In this context Baul songs are but one example to be considered.

The question of the relationship between a culture and its folk songs has been an important one in both the humanistic and social science traditions. In search of explanations, the humanist is frequently drawn to the spiritual and the anthropologist to the mundane, but the traditions of both tend to focus on the unifying basis and cohesive function of folk songs. For the humanist, devotional songs may reflect the spirit of the people, while the anthropologist sees them as mirrors of values and attitudes, justifying institutions to those who participate in them. Folk songs are part of a larger body of folklore that is said to express and validate cultural mores. "Folklore reveals," says Bascom, "the affective elements of culture, such as attitudes, values, cultural goals, and moreover may verbalize these in a form which needs only to be translated and quoted as evidence of a consensus of opinion" (1954:337). Concern in both traditions, therefore, has been with the purity and accuracy of the songs, with them as expressions of an ideal-type. This expression of a unifying principle, then, whether it be one of spirit or of attitudes and values, provides an explanation for their timeless appeal. Nevertheless, I will suggest that the vitality of at least some Bengali devotional folk songs stems more from their ability to accommodate changing circumstances, varying modes of expression and a variety of interpretations than from any underlying unity of soul or purpose. It is in the mundane songs that this is most apparent.

Let me begin with a brief examination of how the emphasis on spirituality in Baul songs came to overshadow the more prosaic in Baul and other folk songs that pervade Bengali life.

Under the influence of Rabindranath Tagore in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the image of the Bauls underwent an important transformation. Until that time they were known as eccentrics and social outcasts, for their heterodox religious doctrines, for their extreme individualism, and for their defiance of established conventions -- especially those of caste and class. The term *bāul* itself means "mad" (Dasgupta 1962: 183-185). These same characteristics, however, came to be the ideals for the succeeding generation of Bengalis. Today, the sound of *bāul sur*, the unmistakable Baul melody, or the sight of the distinctively dressed wandering minstrel, who travels from village to village singing devotional songs, is one that strikes a strong responsive chord in Bengal's population.

The massive social and intellectual upheavals of the early twentieth century initiated a reappraisal and recreation of Bengal's past and present. Tagore, himself a staunch individualist and social critic, found the doctrines of this sect of religious mendicants a reflection of both his own and his generation's longing for freedom from the constraints of a restrictive social and cultural order. The role that the Bauls played in formulating Tagore's own thought and their influence on his poetic works has been well documented (Dimock 1969: 33-55). Indeed, Tagore is credited as the "discoverer" of Baul songs and his roots are said to lie in the long line of Indian poet saints (Dimock 1969: 34). That his image of the Baul was an idealized one has also been recognized (Dimock 1969: 39). Ironically, in contrast to a formerly heretical image, the Baul, evoked through and with Tagore, persists as a potent symbol of Bengali unity and commonality of spirit.

Idealization of the Baul and a concern with purity has resulted in an attempt to collect and compile songs that manifest the "true" or "essential" Baul spirit.² Those expressing ardent spirituality and passionate concern with the ultimates of human existence have consequently been emphasized at the expense of the mundane and prosaic.

A similar process of selection takes place with devotional folk songs in general. Although sung in a devotional context, many of these songs are far from religious or sacred in content. Itinerant beggars wandering from house to house, singing and begging in the name of God, as well as village and town folk singing for periodic *pūjā*, provide a common backdrop to daily activities. The songs are frequently vignettes of day-to-day life, filled with humor, satire, and mimicry that attract a mixed and appreciative audience. The songs reveal diversity in content, perspective and opinion. Given the social and economic conditions of the day, they often point to the incongruity and even the absurdity of cultural values. Far from being a reflection of apparently unanimous cultural ideals, they bring into relief tensions within the existing social system.

II

In the following discussion I examine two groups of songs. The first, those sung in praise of a local deity (*Bhādu*), demonstrates the variation in subject matter put to song on an occasion that brings people together.

for the express purpose of worship. The second group, taken from the repertory of a mendicant beggar and religious devotee, are Baul songs. Examination of both content and form in these songs may suggest some of the reasons for their popularity and persistence over time.

Bhādu pūjā, which takes place during the monsoon season in the Bengali month of Bhādr̥, is confined to the districts of Birbhum, Burdwan and Bankura, and is performed by young unmarried girls. Bhādu is worshipped primarily by girls of the cultivator class. Since their marriages generally take place in the mid-teens, the girls who participate tend to be below the age of fifteen or sixteen. A clay image of the deity, Bhādu, is bought by a family; the daughters offer it food and flowers and sing through the entire night. According to legend, several generations ago Bhādu, the daughter of the Rājā of Kashipur, died on the eve of her marriage. The Rājā proclaimed that all girls in the kingdom should worship Bhādu on that one night each year.³

Songs are generally passed down from mother to daughter. In addition, each year songs are written and published anew, incorporating commentary on the latest local events, and social and political developments.⁴ Some deal specifically with the worship of Bhādu, such as the following:

Bhādu pūjā will be performed.

Oh ladies, when you come bring Ganges water,
Place a coconut on the pot filled with Ganges water,
Beat the drum to your heart's content,

Pūjā will be performed.

Serve her as dainty dishes as you please.
We shall order all sorts of musical instruments.
Paired drums will be beaten.
The children will dance all night and
Bhādu will buy sweets from the sweet shop.

(Bandopadhyay 1972a:3)

But Bhādu's marriage is the most common theme. References to present-day wedding practices and the use of English phrases suggest that she is a modern young lady.

Bhādu's Wedding

Today is Bhādu's wedding day.
Mother and daughter come early!
You will accompany the bride or the bridegroom.
You will dine and spend the night happily
 chewing betel.
The fish curry, the sweets and pulao have
 been made.
From clarified butter which was bought
Lest people suffer if I cook them in vegetable
 oil.

The guests praise the *khirkadam* of Savarkar.⁵
Happily we will serve snacks according to custom.
The bridegroom will come in a "Fiat" car.⁶
And the groom's party will come in a "jeep."
The band is from Asansole.
Do go and bring the loudspeaker.
(Ibid.: 4)

Bhādu's Bridal Chamber

After the wedding ceremony
The friends of Bhādu will gather at her
bridal chamber.
Bhādu is an educated lady,
She is "up to date in culture."
She passed her "B.A." examinations with "honors."
She is also a good singer,
Entertaining her guests with her songs.
She is beautiful and has a sweet voice.
Honey seems to drip from her voice.
You should all gather at the bridal chamber.
The new bridegroom does not know how to sing,
And therefore he says that gentlemen do not sing.⁸
(Ibid: 5)

*Phul Śaṅṅā*⁹

Phul śaṅṅā will take place.
Bhādu will be put to shame by the touch of flowers.
Garlands will be made out of flowers.
The bed will be decorated with flowers.
People will be pleased seeing the well-matched
bride and bridegroom.
Don't figure how much has been spent on the furniture
Because money must be spent extravagantly.
If you think of it you will just be upset.
(Bandopadhyay 1972b: 5)

Current political events also provide an important source of subject matter. This song deals with the recent struggle of Bangla Desh for independence.

Bangla Desh

Tighten your belts.
All of us will go to Bangla Desh.
Brother Muijibur is fighting for independence.
He will die or live with honor.
He has taken a vow to kill the enemy
By dint of his life.
Democracy is his principle.
And that Yahya will leave and return to his
own country.

The sounds of the guns and cannons can be
heard throughout the night and day.
They are killing people mercilessly with
"tanks" and "machine guns."
In the end what will be the fate of the West
Pakistan forces.
The guerrillas of Brother Mujibur pay them
back in their own way.
We await the final judgement of God towards
Bangla Desh.
May Mujib live forever with the blessings of
Iswar and Allah.
(Ibid.: 6)

The situation in Bangla Desh is compared to the epic past:

The Pakistan War

The war did not stop:
People in Pakistan panicked.
Thousands of brothers and sisters were killed.
The sound of the cannons can always be heard.
There is an exodus of people to our country.
People leave behind their happy households.
People are dying from "bomb" and "cannon."
Our hearts ache to see such horrors.
It reminds us of the Pandavas in the Mahābhārata.
Narāyan says we must get to the root of the evil.
(Bandopadhyay 1972b: 5) (Ibid. 5)

Topical problems such as the epidemic of conjunctivitis that raged in Bengal for about two months during 1972 served as a theme during that time. The epidemic was popularly said to be caused by weeping for the refugees from Bangla Desh and was appropriately called "Jay Bāñlā," on "Long live Bengal."

Jay Bāñlā

Well, Karuna,
See, everybody's eyes are red.
Everybody has caught the disease "Jay Bāñlā."
If you get it, you will not be cured for three
days.
"Penicillin" and "capsules" are useless,
Just wash your eyes with salt water.
If you shed tears they will burn less,
But the redness will not go away.
Not only pickpockets, but everybody is using
sun glasses.
Once you get by "Jay Bāñlā, you have to take it.
Even if you say "Babā"¹⁰ it won't go away.
You shouldn't stare at anything.
When you wake up in the morning you will find
your eyes stuck closed.

No one knows the origin of the disease
That only affects the eyes.
Why don't you attack big and strong people instead?
(Bandopadhyay 1972a: 7)

III

Folk songs address a wide variety of topics, but it is not the subject matter alone that explains their popular appeal. Several devices are used in Bengal to achieve maximum flexibility in presenting a case and evoking a wide range of response from the audience. Humor and satire are, of course, common. Tension-ridden issues, when made the subject of mirth, appear less formidable and suddenly capable of solution. What appears humorous to one section of the population, however, may be considered a serious rendering of the situation to another. For example, the use of English and upper-class phrases in the mouth of an illiterate cultivator striving to be "modern" is a source of amusement to the factory worker or businessman, but an accurate humorless rendering for the cultivator. Where the population is heterogeneous in class and caste affiliation, songs may be variously interpreted by different people.

Objectification of the subject matter may be highlighted by the *bhāṇita*, or signature line. The *bhāṇita* is a commonly used formula in Vaiṣṇava lyrics on which Baul songs are patterned, and today is common in other genres of folk song as well.¹¹ In these last few lines the song writer may simply identify himself or he may take the opportunity to step back from the scene he has just described and comment upon it. As a commentator, he may thereby place the situation in an entirely new perspective, or he may sympathize with and reiterate the plight of one of the characters involved. In either case, the outside point of view provides the listener with a new frame of reference. In the next section the songs are of particular interest since they are sung in the traditional *bāul sur*, or melody, but are not necessarily sung by a Baul.

Nilkanta Dās is one such devotee, a wandering minstrel of the Boishnab sect who lives with his mother in Bankura District. Carrying only a small bundle of clothes and his *khanjari*, small bell-metal cymbals, for musical accompaniment, he travels from village to village and house to house with a repertory of Baul songs, *kirtan*,¹² and film songs. Once a year he comes to Rajmāth, where he is given shelter for two nights at the house of a Brahman family. The town of Rajmāth is located on the edge of a major urban-industrial center in West Bengal and many of the inhabitants, only recently absorbed into the labor force of local industries, continue to cultivate land in the surrounding villages. Some families derive their subsistence from cultivation and factory work, while others depend entirely on jobs as workers, clerks, and businessmen. The young people strive to find jobs in industry that will bring them a regular income and enable them to buy the latest prestige items: a radio, a watch, a bicycle, etc. They look on cultivation as unrewarding and somewhat demeaning, while their elders frequently scorn the new fashions and notions that urban industrial

life has introduced. The new *bābū*, or Westernized gentleman who exhibits an air of urbane ease and leisure, disdainful of physical labor, is particularly subject to satirical treatment. It is from Nilkanta Das in the town of Rājmath that the songs of Section IV were collected.

The population of Rājmath, only fifteen years ago rural and agricultural, is now subject to the pressures of inflation and spiraling material and social aspirations. The songs that follow express the difficulties inherent in attempting to abide by traditional cultural ideals in a rapidly changing world. Through satire, the incongruous nature of evolving social patterns and the apparent absurdity of particular cultural values are highlighted.

One of the greatest burdens faced by the population is the ever increasing cost of marrying off a daughter. Where once bride price prevailed, dowry has become a widespread custom. The following song expresses the dismay felt by a father at the prospect of finding a suitable bride-groom for his daughter. He laments the materialism displayed by a boy's family under the guise of modesty and complains that even when the boy is uneducated, they demand expensive items -- a radio, a bicycle, and diamond ring -- the status symbols of modern youth. The prospective mother-in-law who can never be satisfied and the worried mother who thinks only of her daughter's marriage are made objects of humor.

I cannot bear the responsibility
Of marrying off my daughter.
Worrying, I am unable to sleep,
I have lost all appetite.
I wander from place to place
In search of a groom for my daughter.
Like a beggar I go from door to door.
Pulling the *ghōmtā* [end of *sari*] this way and that.
The boy's mother is very grave.
If a thousand rupees are not forthcoming, she sulks.
In any case, she never stops grumbling.
"My son is a high school graduate,
If you don't give him a 'radio,'"
When the father of the boy sees his son's
future mother-in-law,
He forgets all [reason].
He demands thirty *tolas* of gold, buttons and
a watch.
And all the necessary household goods must be
weighty.
If the *phul-śaṅgā* gifts are not good enough,
There will be no wedding.
Even a boy who has never gone to school
Will not agree to marry
Unless he is given a 'Hunter cycle.'
If there is no diamond ring,
There will be no wedding.

Thinking of this, Gousai Harapada says,
I have been relieved of one daughter; I don't
want any more.
Then, too, I can no longer endure the constant
chatter of my daughter's mother
Who makes me night-blind during the day.

In the next song a man bemoans the change his life has undergone since marriage. He has fallen prey to the whims of his wife, who not only demands the latest fashionable items, but leaves him to care for the child while she entertains herself in the city. Unemployed, he wonders how he will feed his growing family. The song writer puts him in his place when he comments that these miseries are nothing compared to what is to come after a few more years of marriage.

Since marriage I have turned into a bullock.
I travelled far and near before my wedding,
And I wore expensive clothes.
Since marriage, brother, I have become a 'fuse.'¹³
Laughingly my wife says,
"I will go to the 'cinema hall;'
Please buy a ticket and baby sit for me."
My wife wants a *hākābā* sari,
A vanity bag for her left hand and a wrist
watch for the right.
Furthermore, brother, she wants eyeglasses.
What a bother!
First I was one, then we became two,
And in the course of the year we added one more.
I have no job, brother; how will I feed the
children?

Thinking of this, Gaurangadās says to me,
Why should you worry so soon after marriage?
You will only realize the true fun of marriage
after a while.

This song does not reflect a generally accepted attitude toward either marriage or wives. Indeed, no single position is consistently satirized or sympathized with. Instead we find that the song writer takes a variety of social roles and opinions.

In the next song, a man tells his wife that when he gets a job in the factory, their problems will be solved and they will live a life of ease and plenty. Concern for her well-being is expressed in his promises to her. Whereas the song would be considered satirical from the point of view of those who have tasted the fruits of factory work, we can also see how, for the landless cultivator who no longer finds land to cultivate, it might be understood as an expression of his own aspirations.

Oh wife, please made some tea.
Oh my dear wife,
There is no more cultivation; I will take a job.
Farming is no fun.
In monsoon one's feet become sore in the water
and mud.
A job is a lot of fun.
I will walk around in a 'suit' and shoes.
I will get 'permanent' work in the 'steel' plant.
I will get five hundred rupees salary; why
should I worry.
I won't keep you in this dilapidated house.
I will take you to a new 'quarter.'
Please wife, go and bring a half kilo of
wheat from the store
And quickly make three or four *parāṭhās*.
Serve me two of them with tea and put the
rest in my 'tiffin carrier.'
There will be no more husking paddy or frying
rice.
Wife, you will only have to get up early and cook,
And after ten in the morning,
You can sleep all day long.
After getting my salary, I will buy you a 'nylon'
sari.
Oh wife, don't look unhappy.
I will have a necklace made for you when I get
pūjā 'bonus.'
At four o'clock in the afternoon we will take
a walk to the market.
We two will take a ricksaw.
We will go to the 'cinema' or theater and buy
'interclass' [second class] tickets.

Too much display of doting affection makes the young husband an object of ridicule and laughter in the next song. Where the new wife moves into her father-in-law's home, the troublesome relationship between the son, his mother, and his wife is proverbial. Here the writer pokes fun at a young husband who, blinded with love for his wife, forgets all duty to his mother, threatening her if she fails to treat his wife with proper care.

"Oh mother, don't abuse my wife.
If you abuse her, I won't stand for it.
She comes from another family¹⁴
And I married her,
If she goes without food,
Then I won't give you any either.
Don't give my wife any cooking to do;
You do it yourself.
Otherwise the heat of the fire will kill her
And I'll not get back again.
Don't let my wife break up the coal;
She'll be covered with dirt and coal dust.
If you make life painful for her, then I'll
make it so for you too.

If my wife falls asleep,
Then fan her gently,
And massage her body.
Or I'll make life difficult for you.
My wife is a mere child;
I try to keep her happy.
Seeing her so soothes me.
Don't give her any trouble.

In yet another song, the song writer gives the mother's point of view. The writer's closing comment seems to imply that there is no end to complaining. It may also, however, be directed against modern young girls who seem to have lost all moral sense, who are disrespectful to traditional customs of worship and their elders, in particular their in-laws.

For what do I have a son and a daughter-in-law
If I have to cry for my food?
Mother's hair is drying up,
But there is a bottle of perfumed hair oil for
his wife.
People will say, Mother is going crazy.¹⁵
Ten months and ten days of pregnancy,
Then I raised you with difficulty.
How much I spent on your wedding,
But the daughter-in-law came only to eat,
And like a queen she rules the house.
Gopal says, "Dear mother, don't criticize her.
If you do you'll learn your lesson."
In this age of *kali*, there is no right or wrong
and no respect for elders.
The wife too is disrespectful, and refuses
to worship *salgram* [the household deity,
Mahadev].
Though her parents-in-law are invaluable gems,
She can't stand to set eyes on them.
What ill luck that I should have such a
virtueless daughter-in-law.
What boon did I ask from god?
Nilkanta says, I am dying, and I will live no
longer.

The potentiality of the *bhanita*, then, is most fully realized when the song writer is slightly ambiguous in his commentary. Rather than giving a straightforward moral interpretation, he may be merely suggestive; that is, his sardonic and humorous tone may be interpreted in one of several ways. The listener, identifying with the poet, is made to feel as if he himself has stepped outside the situation and faces it in an objective manner. This tradition of self-reflection, subtly combining a sense for both the humor and the tragedy of the human condition, occurs throughout Bengali folklore.

While in some songs a particular position is assumed in the body of the song, in others the writer remains aloof from the subject matter under consideration. In the song that follows it is clear that the writer deplores the topsy-turvy world that the desire for money has created. *Kulīns*, ritually the purest of the Brahmins, can, if they are wealthy, get away with performing their rituals imperfectly. They can even worship Coiṭanya, the fifteenth century Vaiṣṇavite saint who preaches an ascetic ecstatic devotionism as opposed to orthodox Brahmanism. Muchis, the Untouchable caste of cobblers, can even live well. At the same time, the writer notes that those who are not sufficiently greedy to amass monetary wealth are miserable. This, he laments, is the state of affairs, but he withdraws from judging the individuals involved. It is possible, therefore, for people in very different positions in the society to listen, to enjoy and to identify with the subject, each with his own interpretation.

If you have no money,
No one will respect you.
Those who have acquired money at home,
By means of money-lending,
Can make their pot bellies grow ever bigger
merely with fried peppers.
They have no need for milk.
Many *kulīn* Brahmins, by sheer strength of money,
Following imperfect rituals,
Worship shaven-headed Coiṭanya.
Even a Muchī, if he has money,
Lives merrily.
How devoted a woman is
To a husband who has money.
[She will say] "Where is my son's father?
It is late in the day,
And I haven't eaten yet.
Call my husband home."
But what does a wife say
Whose husband is without money,
[She will say] "My life has become hell
In the hands of this worthless man.
My father has married me
To a person despised even by the devil."

Thinking of all this, Gousai Haripada says,
Listen, Mr. Money,
Bamacharan [Everyman] cries day and night for money.

The frequent use of English suggests that the songs might communicate to a very limited English speaking public. Although many English words and phrases have been taken into Bengali, they need not, however, be understood literally to convey particular connotations. Nor do they only reflect increasing use of English, although they may do that as well. Nilkanta Das sings not only for those who are educated, who know and use English, but also for the uneducated, unskilled workers and cultivators for whom the English language can evoke very different kinds of imagery.

Frequently the very use of English, the language of the more educated higher classes, takes on importance rather than the denotative meanings of the words employed. Their usage lends an aura of authenticity to what is sung and/or spoken.

Connotations tend to vary with audience and context. In the third song for example, the English words "suit," "permanent," "nylon," etc. may be positive in connotation: the items they designate are, for the young and newly-married cultivator who strives to get ahead, associated with a desirable way of life. At the same time for the upper classes, the cultivator's naive idealism about the ease with which these are acquired once he gets a job, and the haphazard English usage which suggests a striving to raise his status, would be considered humorous. In the next song English phrases may be associated with a scornful attitude towards modern-day fashions and behavior which, from the point of view of the older male generation, seem morally corrupt.

If you try to say what 'ought to be,'
Your wives would twist your ears.
So say, brother, who will dare say what 'ought
to be?'

All these Bengali boys
Have discarded *dhōti*¹⁶ and now wear 'trousers.'
They show off their 'fashion.'
They tighten their belts;
They walk swinging their hips.
It has become fashionable to grow a beard,
Which after trimming, they 'shampoo.'
They suffer from contagious diseases
Of which I am afraid to tell.
All these unmarried girls
Discard saris and wear 'mini' skirts.
They sway in fashionable shoes;
They have sleeveless 'blouses' made,
Their open back exposing their bare waists.
The old mother, the young bride and her mother-
in-law all behave alike.
They wear embroidered petticoats,
And attach 'lace' to them.
After having eaten,
These people, chewing betel,
Go to the movies.

Thinking about this, Purnando says,
How much more will I see in this age of *kali*.
Girls push on,
Pass by, saying, "I am sorry."

The flexibility of these Bāul songs lies then, not only in their frequently topical content, but also in several distinct devices used by the song writer. As mentioned, he may inject humor into situations otherwise the focus of conflict in the society. The *bhāṇitā* may be used to

further objectify and provide a new perspective on the situation. Different roles and points of view may be given by the author and sometimes he equivocates as to his own, allowing the audience to read into the songs their own interpretations. Also, he uses words and phrases, some in English, that carry a largely connotative value for large sectors of the population, rather than a specific denotation. These devices all permit maximum latitude in interpretations, and make it possible for individuals in diverse roles and walks of life to derive enjoyment and meaning from the songs.

IV

As a result of popularity gained through the work of Rabindranath Tagore, the mystical and esoteric songs of the Bauls have received considerable attention. The critical and unorthodox views of Tagore, at a time of resistance to conservative Hinduism and British rule, found in the Bauls an ideal indigenous tradition to serve as a national symbol for the succeeding generation of Bengalis. The Baul, enshrined in a metaphysical doctrine espousing individualism, defiance of social norms, and lofty egalitarian and spiritual ideals, came to stand for the soul of Bengal. Subsequent attempts to search for and compile "true" Baul songs led folklorists to overlook the more mundane and prosaic songs. This is true of other devotional folk songs as well. For those in the humanistic tradition, the songs' reflection of the spirit of the people explains their widespread appeal, whereas for those in the anthropological tradition, their expression of basic cultural values and attitudes does the same. Both the Bhadu songs, performed on an occasion that brings people together specifically for worship, and the Baul songs, sung by individual wandering minstrels, suggest that it is not necessarily a unifying spirit or attitude that enables people of diverse backgrounds to gather together and enjoy the songs. Rather, it seems that a flexibility that permits incorporation of topical events and maximum latitude in interpretation has been of crucial importance. By looking at the mundane and prosaic in devotional folk songs, we may begin to understand how traditional folk idioms persist through time.

NOTES

The transliteration of Bengali words follows the system proposed by Inden and Dimock (1970).

1. I would like to thank Shankar Bhattacharya, Tridib Biswas and Ajoy Guha without whose help these translations would have been impossible, as well as Charles Capwell, George L. Hicks, and Marilyn Trueblood, whose many comments and suggestions I found very helpful. I am also grateful to the American Institute of Indian Studies that made research during 1970-1972 in West Bengal possible.
2. The concern with authenticity, reliability and originality of the songs is reflected in a passage from a recent collection compiled by Deben Bhattacharya: "The two most important sources of the texts available are collections made by the Bauls themselves, and a Baul poet who is still living today. *Unfortunately neither is one hundred percent reliable. The collections written down by semi-literate hands, are not always recorded faithfully and the poet has the habit of leaving his own mark on the songs either deliberately or because of an occasional lapse of memory. It is almost certain that the songs given here will differ from the originals.*" (1969: 11). (The italics are my own.) Although songs about the modern aspects of life and social injustices are not entirely ignored, they are given but scant mention as a by-product of the Baul penchant for incorporation.
3. Ashutosh Bhattacharya has written that *Bhādu puṣā* is originally a non-caste Hindu festivity and that both the legend and clay image are recent accretions. According to him, the songs cannot be considered religious since they incorporate subject matter by whim, concerning such subjects as household affairs and the hopes of young unmarried girls. This too is an example of the concern for origin, purity, and ideal-types in the folklorist tradition.
4. For some folklorists the lore should be maintained only in the oral tradition, so that these songs, as published works, might not qualify as folksongs. Since they are primarily passed around by word of mouth, however, I will consider them as such.
5. *Khirkadam* is a type of Bengali sweet and Savarkar, the name of a sweet shop.
6. "Inverted commas" set off the English usage of a term.
7. 'Ba' is here a pun on the Bengali word *bie*-marriage.
8. This refers to the night after the wedding ceremony at the bride's parents' house, when the bride and groom are to stay awake all-night. The bride's female relatives tease the couple, especially the groom and try to make him sing.
9. *Phul sāṅṅā* refers to the third night after the wedding ceremony, when the marriage is consummated. Their bed is bedecked in flowers.

10. *Bābā* literally means 'father,' but is used idiomatically to appease someone.
11. Viṣṇava lyrics date back to the fourteenth-through-seventeenth centuries, when the *bhakti* movement spread across northern and eastern India. Although the *bhāṇitā* has been considered distinctive of these lyrics and later Bāul songs, we find them today in Bhādu songs, Shyāmā songs, and other devotional songs.
12. *Kīrtan* is a form of worship, sung in praise of Radha and Krishna.
13. The reference here is to an electrical fuse that blows easily.
14. People outside the family come as guests to the house and are treated with special solicitude. Since a girl is supposed to become part of her husband's family after marriage, she, of course, does not qualify for such treatment. The stereotype has it that the new bride is frequently burdened with hard work. Here the husband wants to make sure that she gets the special care given to guests.
15. Unoiled hair is associated with illness or madness. It is commonly said that the head spins if one fails to oil it daily.
16. A *dhotī* is part of the traditional Bengali man's dress.

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Mary Frances Dunham

SELECTIONS FROM *JARIGAN*, THE FOLK EPIC OF MUSLIM BENGAL

A Brief Overview

In the nineteenth century, Bengal urban centers were the site of outstanding political, philosophical, and literary innovations. The oral literature of rural communities was also developing along new lines. Bardic repertoires which had been orally transmitted and refined through many centuries were expanded and altered to meet the current taste of mass audiences for large-scale spectacles. While such better-known performances as *kavigan* and *jatra* developed around Hindu bardic traditions, *jarigan* drew on Muslim sources. The collection of songs presented here in translation belong to this latter genre of bardic recital.

Bengali recitals of narrative verse are traditionally chanted by a chief bard, the *mulgayen* or *boyati*, assisted by a chorus, the *dohar*, literally "repeaters." Nineteenth-century audiences numbered in the thousands and bardic sessions extended for several days and nights at a stretch. To hold the interest of such audiences several teams would be convened to add variety to the program by their individual performances, or would be pitted against each other in poetic debates. In addition to the standard ballads, the repertoires were expanded to include a variety of entertainment media: dramatizations, dances, and vocal recitals of social and topical songs.

The variety of song forms included in a *jari* program may be traced to both pre-Muslim and Muslim sources. *Jari*, from the Persian *zari*, meaning (lamentation) originally signified specific songs sung in the Muharram festival: elegies and *chansons de geste* commemorating the battle of Karbala and, in the process, the lives of all the prophets, saints, and heroes of Islamic religious history. Bards who assisted the religious leaders in the chanting and singing of Muharram literature incorporated Muharram material into their standard repertoires. Thus a specific bardic repertoire developed which combined Muharram themes and song forms imported from Perso-Arabic origins with local ballads and narrative verse forms of native origin. This combined repertoire, with its focus on Muharram themes and its alternation between various literary media, parallels the *tazia* (religious dramas) which developed at the same time in the Middle East. In Bengal the *jari* repertoire produced a Muslim folk counterpart to the great Sanskrit epics. In addition, the "manly" character of its themes contrasts with the more romantic and subtle Vaisnav and Baul traditions in Bengali folk literature.

Jari singing is enjoyed by non-Muslims as well as Muslims in the way any large festival in Bengal becomes intercommunal. A few groups find distasteful the historical inaccuracies of Muharram stories as they do the excesses of Muharram pageantry and penitential rituals from which *jari*

themes are derived. Orthodox Brahmins, orthodox Sunnis, and generally all urbanized Bengalis cannot be expected to be interested in *jari* performances. For this reason, *jari* songs have not received the scholarly attention which has been given to other less controversial genres of Bengali folk songs.

Today, with the social changes which have taken place since the independence of the Indian sub-continent, full-scale performances of *jari* songs, like those of *kavijan* and *jatra*, are disappearing. Now performances are limited by the lack of young men willing to undergo the long apprenticeship required to master a form of expression which cannot compete with the cinema and transistor radio. Nevertheless, today's *jari* sessions and the songs which have been collected from its aging bards attest to the former vitality of this repertory.

The following translations are made of songs which were recorded and musically transcribed by this writer for a book by Jasimuddin, the "poet-laureate" of Bangladesh, on *jarigan* (1968). This publication contains the largest collection of *jari* songs in print. The examples below are only portions, fragments, of longer songs. They were chosen because they illustrate the wide range of themes and song styles which are employed by a *jari* singer. Examples of complete songs are to be found in the main body of Jasimuddin's collection or in sections on *jari* found in anthologies of Bengali folk song.

There are two categories of song composition represented in the examples below. Two songs (examples 1 and 4) are in a traditional verse structure for narrative themes, the *payar* couplet, a pair of rhyming lines containing fourteen syllables (not strictly adhered to in folk poetry) with a binary subdivision of each line: "the Bengali heroic verse." The other songs are in a wide variety of structures of a more complex nature; some are in couplet verses which are longer or shorter than *payar*, others have verses comprising from three to twelve lines. These *dhuya* songs supplement the *payar* songs in a *jari* singer's repertory as embellishments and interludes to the corpus of narrative *payar* chants.

In the *payar* examples, the textual structure governs the melodic composition and the tunestyles are relatively limited and repetitive. These chants articulate most efficiently the textual syllables, phrase groups, line units and couplet structure of a lengthy narrative text. The chants are capable of being imitated and taken up by the *dohar*.

In the *dhuya* examples, two styles of composition are found; both are melodically more elaborate than the *payar* chants. In one style (exs. 3, 5, 6, 7, 8) the melodic composition articulates the textual elements and is conducive to group singing. The other style of *dhuya* songs (exs. 2, 9, 10, 11, 12) consists of melodic compositions which develop independently of their texts. In these latter compositions the verbal stress patterns and syntax are altered to suit the melody. This style is subject to individual improvisation and is not easily sung in chorus. Although the particular words and phrases are obscured by the melodic elaborations in this style, the total effect of such songs is arresting and a mood is vividly conveyed.

vividly conveyed. Both kinds of *dhuya* song, whether of the group or solo variety, are lyrical songs *par excellence*, i.e., musical, and are integral to a *jari* recital as arias are to an opera.

The poetic and melodic inventiveness found in elaborations of *payar* chants and in *dhuya* songs themselves are an identifying feature of the *jari* craft. The *payar-dhuya* polarity found in the examples below reflects the heterogeneous quality of modern bardic repertory in which the *boyati* is free to digress and elaborate a standard chant with new compositions (*dhuya* songs) and the *dohar* not only assist the *boyati* with refrains and repetitions, but contribute a wide variety of *dhuya* songs which are complete in themselves. From the elaborations of a traditional *jari* recitation with its emphasis on narrative content has come a more sophisticated genre combining narrative and lyrical compositions. This genre is more dramatic. It stands in relation to traditional recitations as European miracle plays do to *chansons de geste*.

The excerpts below have been arranged in the following order: an invocation is followed by a series of narrations in chronological sequence, ending with two interlude songs (this is not necessarily the order in which an actual *jari* performance evolves). The translations focus on narrational content and verse structure. They are literal in order to preserve the iconography and immediacy of the vignettes. Line and verse units are written so as to reproduce the melodic syntax of each song. All interjections are transcribed phonetically, e.g., *A! Are! Aha re! Ore! Go!*, etc. The dialectal character of *jari* language is not reproduced nor is the rhythmic euphony and structural control of end-rhymes and inner assonances. For an accurate conception of *jari* songs the reader must supply a poetic and musical artistry not rendered by these translations.

1. *Bandana* (invocation).

An invocal passage such as this one is often included at the beginning or end of a *jari* narration. This *bandana* is in two parts. An introductory address to the audience advises all in attendance to revere Allah and execute His will. This followed by the religio-philosophic views of the singer on the frailty of earthly happiness and the imminence of the Last Day. The mood is lyrically melancholy and complements the more positive moods of the *jari* narratives themselves.

The introductory portion of this passage is in a recitative style. Although there are three lines defined by their end-rhyme, they are ametrical, resembling prose, and the melody expresses this style. The main part of the *bandana* is organized in *payar* couplets with four couplets (eight lines) completing one melodic period or stanza. The melody expresses a good example of a standard *payar* chant.

A hai! A re! Say the name of Allah.
Ei jo! Aha re! Say Allah, Sah His name, believer.
Remain in whatever way you are.
Are! This coveted birth will never come again.
Saying Allah, call (upon) Him.

Are! Say Allah. Say (His name), believer. Take
His name once again, brother.
Are! Only the name of Allah is real; worldly con-
cerns are unreal (useless).
Are o! The saintly birth will never be again.
Allah will not arrange again this bazaar-of-the-moon.
Will there ever be again the birth of men? Shall we
sit row upon row?
Will Allah arrange this gathering-of-the-moon?
The days are over. God's creation is surrounded by
pleasures.
This world is a business of delight. Some weep, some
laugh.

2. The poisoning of Hasan.

Some time before the battle of Karbala, Hasan, the elder brother
of Husein, was poisoned through the instigation of the then Caliph Muawiya.
Unbeknownst to Hasan's wife, poison was placed in the water which she was
to give to her husband when he returned from the hunt.

The verse structure of this passage, isolated from the tune employed,
reveals couplet (non-*payar*) form. The tune is florid and alters the
couplet to three lines per musical stanza.

After hunting,
(Hasan) asks his wife for water.
Not knowing it was poison, his lady brought it and gave
him drink.

And when the Imam drank the poison,
O! His body became black from the poison.
Writhing on the ground, *Are!* the Imam began to cry.

Crying, the Imam said:
Lady, you were my love.
For what fault, *Ha re!* lady, have you made me drink
poison?

O re! When the Imam said this,
His lady beat her head on the rock.
Good fortune, mine until today, has turned against me
[literally, "My right-hand fortune until today has fallen
on the left."]

3. Kasem-Sokhina.

On the seventh day of the battle of Karbala, Kasem, a young son of Hasan, asks his uncle Husein to allow him to enter battle. Husein, after trying to dissuade him, finally gives him permission. However, Husein remembers the wish of his brother Hasan that Kasem should marry Sokhina, Husein's daughter. Knowing that Kasem will be killed, Husein decides to have the wedding that day. Indeed, on the same day as the wedding, Kasem is killed in battle and his bride is left a widow. The pleading of Kasem for Husein's permission and that of his mother to go to battle, his wedding with Sokhina, their parting, and the death of Kasem form the only romantic episodes in the Karbala cycle. The Kasem-Sokhina songs are among the most popular of the *jari* songs.

The following passage is in a couplet form having three subdivisions per line: the *tripadi* verse. It is particularly suited to romantic themes. The tune in which the text is expressed is lively and regularly accented, resembling the tunes which express the "interlude" songs at the ends of this collection. The combination of a gay tune with a tragic theme, whether intended or not, produces an extremely poignant effect.

O re! Arise Sokhina; hear me speak; already night has
changed to dawn.
O re! On the battle field the *kara* [double-ended drum]
is sounded. In the door a sepoy is standing. To-
day I understand I must go to battle.

4. The death of Kasem.

After a brave but losing fight against the enemy, the young groom Kasem is finally killed and his horse returns riderless to the tents of the women.

This passage is in *payar* verse. The refrain lines are probably sung by the *dohar*, although they were sung solo by the bard recorded. The tune for this passage is the most repetitive of those found in this collection and it probably represents a standard narrative chant style similar to that of example 1.

Call upon Allah, my dear ones; this sort of day will
not come again!
Call upon Allah, my dear ones; this sort of day will
not come again!

Standing outside, the horse is making a crying sound.
Call upon Allah, my dear ones!
Standing outside, the horse began to cry.
Call upon Allah, my dear ones, this sort of day will
not come again!

When they hear the horse making a crying sound,
the ladies say:
Call upon Allah, my dear ones!
We understand that having fought in battle, Kasem
has come to this place.
Call upon Allah, my dear ones; this sort of day
will not come again.
When they came outside, the ladies could see (that
Kasem was not there).
Call upon Allah, my dear ones; this sort of day
will not come again.

5. The death of Ashgor Ali.

Ashgor Ali was an infant son of Husein's. He died in his father's arms with his throat pierced by an arrow. In this passage the Bengali poet forgets that the event took place thousands of miles away in a barren region and he imagines the *kokilo*, a native bird of Bengal, bringing the news of the child's death to his mother. Animals appear in a number of other *jari* episodes. They often have other miraculous powers as well as that of human speech. In this passage the distraught *kokilo* interjects his own bird sounds into his message. The message within his speech, the brave words of the dying child, adds an extra touch of pathos.

The verse structure of this passage is in distorted *payar* and the tune structure is complex: four musical phrases per couplet and an irregular articulation of textual stress and syntax. Both the text and the tune show the influence of spontaneous composition.

A! At dawn the *kokilo*, *re!* said: Arise, sad mother;
I have come, *re!* to give you news; I am the black *kokilo*.

I am a bird; I live in the forest; my nest is in the forest.
I saw the death, *re!* of Ashgor Ali; his life no longer survives.

A! At the time of death Ashgor said: *Koi-o! koi-o!*
koi-o! re! Take this news to my mother:
Your Ashgor has died, *re!*, by the hand of the terrible Kafir, *re!*

6. Husein's death.

In this passage the horse of Husein, Kuldul, returns to the tents of his family after he has been killed. The incident parallels that of Kasem's death. Husein's horse was given to him by his illustrious father, Imam Ali (also a martyr). Symbolic Dulduls are an important element in all Muharram processions.

The verse structure is *payar* altered by the addition of interjections and a short refrain to suit the more complex tune structure: five melodic phrases per textual couplet. The melody is characterized by *fioriture* and sustained notes.

A! Staying outside the horse, *re!*
Began to cry.
Then, when (Husen's) wife hear it, *A re!*
She came outside.
O re! What have I lost! *Re!*

His lady said to the horse, *Re!*
Tell me, dear Duldul,
Where have you left your rider? *Go! O mori aha re!*
You have come alone, *re!*
O re! What have I lost! *Aha re!*

7. The captivity of Husein's family.

After the ten days of fighting at Karbala when all Husein's men have been killed and he finally succumbs to a brutal death; his head is cut off and taken to the Caliph Yezid. Husein's surviving family -- wives, sisters, daughters, and remaining small son, Joynal -- all are taken to the court of Yezid. In this passage the caliph taunts Husein's daughter, Fatema, with the severed head of her father.

The verse structure consists of couplets whose lines are filled out with lengthened syllables and interjections to conform with a four-phrase melodic structure. The irregular rhythmic patterns of the melody alter the normal stress patterns and syntax of the text, but thereby dramatize the horror and grief of the scene described.

O re! The terrible Ejid said, *O re!*, in front of Fatema:
O! Come, take and eat (these) dates.
He gave the severed head of Husein into her hands.
O re! Saying, *Hai! Hai!* (the women) wept.

O re! (Fatema) said:
This face-like-the-moon which I behold was his.
For what fault did you put a knife in the throat of
my father?
Ejid, is there no feeling in your body?

O re! The stream of blood on this face-like-the-moon!
This is the corpse of my dear father!
(Your) fortune, *O re!*, Ejid, is sin; you have done a sin.
This (head) was the eyes-and-stars of Fatema.

8. Joynal and Hanifa.

Joynal, the surviving son of Husein, is spared by the Caliph Yezid, but he is kept for some time in prison. Joynal writes to his step-uncle Hanifa (a step-brother of Husein) to tell him the tragic news of Karbala. The letter is taken to Hanifa by a messenger, Kased. In this passage Hanifa receives the letter. Sparing "the Kafer" refers to a fight Hanifa had with the Muawiyids previous to Karbala.

The verse structure consists of three relatively long textual lines set to three melodic phrases which are elaborated by *fioriture* and sustained notes.

O re! When Mohammad Hanifa received the letter of Joynal,
He received it from the hand of Kased; his heart was very happy.
O re! Reading the letter, he began to grow pale and faint
because of his brother [literally], step-brother.

O! Ki hai re! I could not see you, my brother!
If I had known before that the Kafer would kill you, brother, *re!*
O re! I would not have spared the Kafer in this world.

O! What! Hai re! My brother, you have left me!
I will not see you again, my brother, calling (on you) brother!
O re! This grief, this terrible grief for my brother! *Re!* My
heart can not endure it.

9. Joynal and Hanifa.

After reading Joynal's letter, Hanifa goes to find him at the caliph's palace. He meets a little boy in the courtyard who fights with him and, in the process, they recognize each other. This passage is Joynal's greeting to his uncle.

The verse structure is a couplet with three subdivisions per line. Six melodic phrases articulate verse structure, normal stress patterns, and syntax of the text. The tune is lively and rhythmically compelling.

A are! Joynal said: Uncle Hanifa, you have come;
take me in your lap; fulfill my hearts desire.
My father, my uncles have died, darkening this house.
I am the only son to have escaped.

10. Joynal and Hanifa.

Hanifa greets Joynal. The concealed grave refers to the burying of Husein's body by his wife and family under cover of dark on the last day at Karbala.

The verse structure is a triplet with two subdivisions per line and is expressed by three or four (depending on alternate interpretations) melodic phrases which do not conform to the textual line structure. Some verbal stress patterns are altered.

O re! Hanifa said: Come to my lap, Joynal, precious child.
O re! In what grave is concealed my brother Husein?
O re! Take me to that grave; *go!*, and make it my grave.

11. Interlude song: The old man and his elderly bride.

This example and the next are not necessarily limited to *jari* singing. In this song the refrain, "*Dhan tolo, dhan tolo bole*," would indicate that his song may be sung at harvest time. However, the theme of this song, the antics of an elderly peasant couple, also appears in the mummery of Muharram processions in South India.

The verse structure comprises twelve lines: four couplets with a refrain line after the first and fourth couplet, followed by half a couplet completed by the refrain line. The tune expresses the textual elements. It is rhythmically compelling and light in mood.

The old man dances; the bride of the old man dances.
They have rubbed paste on the holes in their teeth. No one notices.

The old man dances, the old woman dances.
When he goes to the old woman, he speaks words of marriage to her.
The old woman quickly went home to put on her gold.
Talking to the mirror in her hand, the old woman began to cry;
She began to consider that there were no teeth in her mouth:
What shall I do? There are no teeth in my mouth!
How shall I go to my in-laws' house?
Saying pick the paddy, pick the paddy.
The heavy cloth has gotten wet. No one has noticed the mark.
Saying pick the paddy, pick the paddy.

12. Interlude song: The marriage of Town Ali with the sister of Sea Ali.

This fragment of a song is quoted in almost identical form in another collection of *jari* songs as well as in Jasimuddin's anthology. It may be a favorite item in a *jari* program.

The verse quoted consists of a short refrain, "*Gun, gun, gun*," introducing a triplet verse whose lines are broken into short phrases. The last line is complete by the original refrain. The melody articulates the textual elements. It is rhythmically spirited and compelling.

A re! *Gun, gun, gun!* Town Ali is marrying the sister of
Sea Ali.
They smoke the *hukka* noisily in Mecca: Chegor Ali, Bengor
Ali, Tegor Ali puff.
Playing the gum-a-gum beat, they pull on the spinning
wheel of the old woman. *Gun, gun, gun!*

REFERENCE CITED

Jasimuddin.
1968 *Jarigan*. Dacca: kendriya Bangla Union Board.

Norman H. Zide

TWELVE JADUR SONGS

*Translated
from Mundari*

The texts of these songs are taken from *Mundari Jadur Songs* (by Ram Dayal Munda and Normaz Zide, Chicago, 1968, mimeographed), the texts and translations of eighty-four Jadur songs. The Mundari texts come through R. D. Munda, some from versions published (sometimes revised by Munda) in collections, and some from his own knowledge. The translations here are by Norman Zide. They are fairly literal, but less systematically so than those in the bilingual collection. Those interested can find out more about Mundari songs in various articles of Munda, and Zide and Munda, and now in *The Empty Distance Carries* by Sitakand Mahapatra. Some of the features of Jadur song construction are maintained in these translations: e.g., the four-line stanza as two parallel couplets, the second derived (sometimes mechanically and 'illogically') from the first; the line repetition, and recycling of lines in successive stanzas, and the nearly universal subject matter of the songs: love, marriage, the passing of youth, hard times.

Other characteristics of the songs, e.g., the pervasive onomatopoeia, seems impossible to convey in English poems (it is much more possible to convey this -- at least in part -- in other Indian languages, e.g., Hindi or Bengali), although in one song here (maran̄ garā . . .) I have tried to put across some of the effect of the expressive -- visual -- verbs *bijir-bijir* here translated as 'to glitter,' and *biyal-boyon* 'to shine.'

I give the Mundari first lines and the song numbers in Munda and Zide (1968, see above) for anyone interested in looking at the originals.

Munda and Zide

Number here

48	jili-mili sereq(g) re	1.
55	maran̄(g) garā cirpi leka mainam	2.
78	riṅga do gulinca hijutana	3.
23	cetan ʔolam rakab re maina	4.
67	ne leka somae re	5.
21	caudal cetan re	6.
16	buṇḍu ʔamaṇaṇi biurkena	7.
77	rasika jao rasika	8.
10	aṭa-maṭa birko tala re	9.
17	buruateni lelmere gatini	10.
38	hae dhoni sonamuni re	11.
34	duṇḍigara dukansae	12.

The Mundari words are pronounced with the vowels having -- roughly -- the values they have in Italian. The *c* in this transcription of Mundari is an 'unaspirated (English) *ch*.' The consonants with dots under them are retroflexed.

1.

On the wide-shining rocks,
Girls washing clothes . . .
Near the splashing waterfall,
Boys scrubbing loincloths . . .

O girls washing clothes,
They're drifting away.
O boys scrubbing loincloths,
They're floating away.

The clothes are drifting --
To the deeps where the snakes are.
The loincloths are floating --
To the place where the crocodiles live.

2.

You glitter, girl, *bijir-bijir*,
Like a *cirpi* fish from the big river, girl.
You shine, girl, *biyan-boyon*,
Like an *aera* fish from the stream, girl.

You glitter, girl, *bijir-bijir*,
While your mother lives, girl.
You shine, girl, *biyan-boyon*,
While your father lives, girl.

You'll work for a stranger, girl,
When your mother dies.
You'll drudge for a Sarga, girl,
When your father's dead.

3.

There's a famine coming, Gulinca,
-- And you're fixing your hairknot.
There'll be a drought, Mocokoni
-- And you're smoothing your sari border.

You're fixing your hairknot,
Will it feed us, your hairknot?
You're smoothing your border,
Will it help us, your border?

I fix my hair because I feel like fixing it,
Not for food, not for help.
I smooth my border because I want to smooth it,
Not for food, not for help.

4.

On your way up to the village, girl;
You walk along -- fixing your hairknot.
On your way down to the hamlet, girl;
You go along -- smoothing your sari border.

You have the time, girl;
You walk along -- fixing your hair.
You have your youth, girl;
You go along -- smoothing your sari.

When your time goes, girl,
The knot comes loose.
When your youth passes, girl,
The border rips.

5.

Now, this season--
Marry her off.
When she's young like this
Give her in marriage.

If you won't marry her this year
Then keep her -- like paddy.
If you won't give her this year
Store her -- like tubers.

Keep her -- like paddy --
But she'll slip out to Bundu.
Store her -- like tubers --
She'll run off to Tamar.

6.

You on the *caudal*,
Don't cry, girl.
You on the palanquin,
Don't weep, girl.

Don't cry, girl;
The house will be yours.
Don't weep, girl;
The hearth will be yours.

7.

I made the trip to Bundu and Tamar,
But all I could marry -- a hag gathering straw.
I went all the way to Hasa and Bajigama,
But all I could find -- an old man on a stick.

I want to regret, I want to be sorry
All I could marry was a hag gathering straw,
I want to regret, I want to be sorry
All I could find was a man on a stick.

My sorrow
Layered like rock.
My grief
Trembled like leaves.

8.

Joy, old joy,
You don't come out, joy.
Feeling, old feeling
You don't show now, feeling.

Joy, like a leashed hawk,
Have you tied yourself down, joy?
Feeling, kite-in-a-cage,
Have you caged yourself up, feeling?

Joy, the hawk-leash --
Take it off, joy.
Feeling, the kite-cage --
Break it off, feeling.

Joy, the hawk leash --
Take it off, joy.
Feeling, the kite-cage --
Break it off, feeling.

Joy, the hawk leash --
It doesn't come off, joy.
Feeling, the kite-cage --
It won't break off, feeling.

9.

Don't leave me, dear,
In these thick woods.
Don't desert me, friend,
In this thorny place.

When I burned like fire --
Didn't you see me?
When I flowed like water --
Didn't you know me?

There was dust all over --
I didn't see you.
There was fog all around --
I didn't know you.

10.

From the mountain -- I look for you, dear.
You're not to be seen.
From the plain -- I try to find you, dear.
You're not to be found.

I wound *hundi* flowers on a stick, dear.
You're not to be seen.
I strung garlands of *ica* flowers, dear.
You're not to be found.

You're not to be seen.
And they withered -- on that stick.
You're not to be found.
And they faded -- on the string.

They withered --
And my heart too.
They faded --
And my body too.

11.

Sonamani dear --
I'm miserable.
Rupamani dear --
I'm in such trouble.

Can't you see --
I'm miserable?
Don't you realize
I'm in trouble?

I've worried and worried --
And I'm withering.
I've grieved and grieved --
And I'm fading away.

12.

Dukansae of Dundigara
Is not afraid.
Rotonsae of Ramgara
Is not frightened:

Make up -- for him --
A hundred bows.
Prepare -- for him --
Twenty bowstrings.

Let him stand up
Under the *merel* tree.
Let him be ready
Under the *rola* tree.

James Fisher

THREE NEPALESE "JOKES"

Collected and translated in Nepal

Editor's Note: These 'jokes' or stories were collected in northern Nepal in 1970. They represent a seldom collected or translated aspect of South Asian folk literature. Humor, as has been noted again and again, provides outlets for socially repressed desires -- or desires which are counter to the society itself. These three 'jokes' deal with suppressed themes in South Asia -- what Ved Vatuk has identified as dominant themes in South Asian humor -- namely, sex, shit, and sadism. In all three 'jokes,' one, if not more, of these elements is used to evoke the laughter of the audience. They might be considered 'dirty' stories by some readers: I have included them here because they do provide us with a new perspective on South Asian culture and folk literature.

I

In a village between Bhot and Tarakot [or in Bhot], there lived a man. He was so poor that he had nothing to eat or wear, so he wore only native clothes. He came to a house where an old man and woman lived. He asked, "What are you sowing?" They said, "We are sowing wheat." Then the beggar said, "Let there be a good harvest for you." He moved on and came to a boy and girl, and asked them what they were sowing; they said, "We are sowing penises." He said, "Let your field produce a good crop of penises." He went around the country and came back to find the field full of penises. He cut 100 and opened a shop, selling a penis for Rs. 5. A nun came and asked what it was for sale -- she couldn't recognize what a penis was. She asked what it was used for. The shopkeeper explained that if she said "*Tsuk, tsuk*" it would come and have sexual intercourse with her; when she said "*Hu kyu* [sound of exhaustion];" it would withdraw. She asked the price, paid it, and took it home. That night she tried it and liked it very much. One day she went to another village to do *gyan*, but she forgot to bring the penis with her. She asked a man to go to her house and bring a certain box without looking [at it] and gave him five rupees for his efforts. She had said not to look, but it seemed very light and he was curious about what could be in it. So on the way he opened the box and saw the penis. He thought this was scandalous and said, "*Tsuk, tsuk*" in disgust. At this the penis began to penetrate his anus. He became very frightened and ran straight up the hill and back down to the river and fell asleep from exhaustion, sighing in fatigue in the process. So the penis withdrew. When he woke up, he furiously attacked the penis with his knife and cut it into pieces. Then he wrapped it up in cloth, put it in the box and delivered it to the nun. That night the nun said, "*Tsuk, tsuk*," but the penis didn't come, so she looked and saw that it was cut up and dead. She thought a *lama* doctor might be able to cure it, so she called him to her house. She said nothing but just placed the butchered penis in a cup. The nun went away for a minute, and the doctor thought the meat in

the cup was for him to eat, so he ate it. Then the nun came again and the doctor told her to bring what needed curing so he could cure it. The nun said, "But I put it in the cup in front of you." The doctor said that he thought it was meat and had eaten it.

II

Once upon a time there lived an old man with his old wife. They had three daughters. One married a bear, the second married a tiger, and the third married a sheep. One day they visited their first daughter and the bear son-in-law. The bear had nothing in his house to entertain his father-in-law and the mother-in-law with. So he told his wife to heat red-hot a frying pan and went to a forest. There he ate as much as his stomach could contain. Then he came back home and sat over the red-hot pan. The fat on his buttock melted and fell into the pan. Then he defecated into the pan. With this he made very nice cakes. The old man and his wife lived there for four or five days, happily eating those cakes. Then they went back home. One day it took the fancy of the old man to bake cakes as his bear son-in-law did. He told his wife to heat red-hot a pan and himself ate a lot. As his wife heated the pan, he sat over it to defecate. But his anus was burnt and he was sick for many days. His old woman slowly nursed him back to health.

Later they went to visit their second daughter and the tiger son-in-law. The tiger also had nothing to give them to eat, so he made the old man and the old woman each carry a bamboo basket and follow him to the jungle. He told them to carry home whatever he threw into their baskets. The tiger killed two young buffaloes and threw them into a basket. The old man and his wife carried them to the tiger's home where they stayed for four or five days, eating meat to their heart's content. At last, they came back home. Once home the old man went one day to where there was a flock of buffaloes. He made his wife carry a basket and told her to carry straight home whatever was thrown into her basket. But the buffaloes gored him with their horns and threw him headlong into the old woman's basket. Upon reaching home, the old woman found the old man lying senseless in the basket. With a great deal of care she nursed him back to health.

Then, they went to see their third daughter and the sheep son-in-law. The sheep took them to a forest and felled trees by butting them with his horns and gave them enough wood for winter. With this wood, they were warm all winter until the stock of wood was finished. So the old man went to a forest with his wife for wood. There he died in his attempt to fell trees, butting them as his sheep son-in-law had done.

III

A & B were travelling around and on their way they saw a man carrying a double load of clay pots. A asked B if he could make those pots break themselves. B asked how. Then A put off his cap, took it in his

hand, and just ran by that man. The man asked A why he was running. A said, "Don't you see, the sky is catching fire?" Then the man looked up and as he did so, the rope which he had stretched against his forehead got loose, making all his earthen pots fall to the ground and break into pieces. Then the two friends giggled and proceeded further.

Later they came across a man and his wife. Then B asked A if he could cause a quarrel among those two men. A asked B how. So B called the man's wife and whispered to her, "I am whispering and the whisper has no meaning." Saying this he went away. The woman got angry and went back to where her husband was. Her husband asked her what B had told her. She replied, "Nothing." So her husband got angry with her. He thought that Mr. B must be her love. So they started quarreling. Again the two friends laughed merrily and went on their way.

Some time later they came to a field where some girls were weeding. Then Mr. A asked B whether he could make a girl eat his shit. B said, "Let me see how you will do it." Then A went and stopped at a spot in the field where the girls would have to come in the course of weeding. At that spot he put some stone chips, defecated over them, and covered them with earth. Then one of the girls, in the course of weeding, touched the shit. She at once shook her hand which struck against the stone chips. These hurt her and she instantly raised her hurt finger to her mouth. The two friends laughed heartily and went on.

Arlene R. K. Zide

FOUR FOLK TALES OF THE GORUM

Collected in
Orissa

These translations of Gorum¹ narratives texts are from field notes made by the present author in Orissa over the last six years. The selection was made, not so much in pursuit of literary elegance, but rather as a sampling of themes and narrative styles typical of Gorum folk tales.

The teller of such tales, usually an old woman or an old man who is considered to be particularly adept at storytelling sits around drinking *pendom* or *ali*² with the other people of the village during a festival. The drinking, dancing, feasting and storytelling, typical of these frequent festivals, will go on through the night, until everyone has fallen asleep or has drunk himself into a stupor.

Of the four stories, the first is the most internally consistent thematically, but not the most typical. Unlike two of the other three stories, which have mythological or supernatural themes, it is didactic and fable-like in its conciseness, directness of theme and tongue-in-cheek, implicit moral ending. It is typical, however, in that the protagonists are the ubiquitous old man and old woman of Koraput Munda stories. It is typical too in its pervasive humorous tone, and its argumentative old people as vehicles of village humor.

The "women's lib" moral of the story is not inconsistent with the typical unHindu-like freedom of Munda women. Munda women, unlike their more recently arrived Hindu sisters, while having definite roles, still have freedom of choice in matters such as matrimony, and can and do divorce an inadequate husband, simply by picking up and leaving to go live with someone else more congenial.

The stories with mythological or supernatural themes are more typical in their rambling style and "inconsistency" of story line. The narrative style, with continuous recapitulation of the action of the previous sentence, e.g., *She went there. Having gone there, she brought the boy home, etc.*, and affirmation as emphasis at various crucial points in the text are best exemplified in the second story. The narrator says: "That's how it was," or "And so saying, he did X." The dialogue, with its simplistic and often syntactically ambiguous constructions reflecting everyday Gorum speech, forms the bulk of the text.

In the story of the sun and the moon, the story line seems to indicate an intention of "explaining," in a mythological sense, how the sun and the moon came to be, and why one appears at night and the other during the day. However, the story goes on, beyond the suggestions of its title to "explain" also why there are stars, and why the same face of the moon is

always turned toward the earth. In this sense, the story is "inconsistent" or less coherent in comparison with the story of the mushrooms which has a single theme: the greedy old man getting his just deserts from the old woman who works hard while he lazes.

The inconsistencies in the story of the sun and the moon may perhaps be ascribed to the combination of elements of two or more originally distinct stories from which the storyteller may have derived the present version.

The image of the moon as a flower (reflected) in a river, a theme in itself, does not exactly parallel the image of the sun as a bull. The latter, along with the poison-rain motif, recalls Velikovskian theories of similar widespread mythological "explanations" for his hypothesized intrusion of the "comet" Venus at some point in real time ca. 1500 B.C.³ A more striking parallel -- to the sun-as-bull abducting the girl motif -- is the Zeus-Europa story, although of course, the parallel goes only so far.

That this particular incident can be considered autonomous can be seen from the fact that the tale could have ended with the phrase, *because of this it became day*. However, the story does not end there in this particular version, but goes on; a second -- related -- incident emerges, one providing an explanation of the light of the moon, and the existence of stars at night along with the moon (but not with the sun during the day).

There is not enough data to construct a plausible structural analysis of the second story: e.g., why various seemingly (to a non-Gorumi) unrelated items are introduced at various points in the story (i.e., "what is happening and why").

The introduction of such seemingly unrelated items as the house springing up when the flower "returns to" human form, the change in kin relationship between the sun and the moon, the "eating" (eclipse, merger with #X of the sun by the terrestrial people, etc., seem not to puzzle the Gorumi listener. Presumably some outsiders' questions have answers familiar to the Gorumi listeners, and/or the narrative structures of Gorumi stories (and the cultural presuppositions ties in with these) do not give rise to such questions as trouble and confuse the outsider.

One possible analysis would concern the relationship with the "people" down below, who, after all, are: 1) different from the "people" who live "up above," i.e., the sun and his children and the moon and her children; and 2) who "eat" the sun (merge with him, eclipse him, kill him?).

The sun in opposition to the moon also seems to indicate two clans (moieties, people?). (It is not uninteresting to note in this connection that there is a sun clan extant and prominent in the Gorumi groups.)

The relationships are obscure, but the story hints of elements of rivalry between two closely related groups (the sun and the moon) who are clearly more different from the "people" below, who threaten them in some way, than they are from each other. These "people," however, trace their origins to the "people" above. The theme of a brother and sister who

later marry each other is not uncommon among the Koraput Munda groups.⁴

The third and fourth stories share a common motif frequent in such Gorum tales, that of the search for a marriage partner for a young girl (or young boy) who has come of age. In the third story, of the ghost-boy, there is the element of surprise about the newly-acquired partner, in this case a ghost (in other stories he [or she] may turn out to be a witch, a crocodile, a bear, etc., and the "action" of the story usually involves the escape from and/or deception of the undesirable new partner). This story is interesting particularly for its characterization of a ghost as a drinker of the people's blood.

The fourth story is a good example of the kind of humor a Gorum associated with bodily functions and this is a frequent subject in the folktales. Like the first story, it is free from mythological or supernatural motifs; rather, it deals again with the humor of relationships within a family, in this case between the son-in-law and the father-in-law. The father-in-law, thinking his son-in-law deliberately brought spoiled crabs, suggests he will repay him by getting some for the son-in-law and feeding them to him. But as usual, it is the old man who is the butt of the story and he suffers an ignominious death.

Items supplied by the present translator to aid the flow of the narration in English, but not present in the original text, are contained within parentheses. It is frequently difficult to draw the line between literal and non-literal translations because of the vast difference between the two languages. We have attempted here to keep the translations as literal as possible without making them unintelligible to an English speaker.

I

Story of the Man and Woman

There was an old man and an old woman. The old man used to go for mushrooms. The old woman used to go and work (in the fields) for wages.

The old man said:

"Say, old woman, you go and work in the fields and I'll go for mushrooms." That's the way the two -- the old woman and the old man -- used to talk.

So, the old woman would go and bring home paddy (which she received as wages for working in the fields) and the old man would bring home mushrooms.

The old woman would carry home a *man*⁵ of paddy, and the old man would bring back a basket of mushrooms. Afterwards, the old woman would pound the paddy and the old man would wash the mushrooms.

Now, at their place there was a rooster, and once (they came back and found that) someone had killed the rooster (while they were gone.)

"O, old woman," said the old man.

"What, old man?", said she.

"Some murderer has gone and killed our rooster. What are we going to do, old woman?"

"Well, bring it over to me, old man. Cut it up; let's cook it and eat it."

"But, old woman, I have brought mushrooms."

"Never mind, old man, let's cook the meat," and having said this, she mixed the mushrooms with the meat.

The old man said: "But, old woman, I don't have any teeth. Give me the pieces of meat. You, old woman, eat the bones." Then, the old woman, telling him it was all meat, gave the mushrooms to the old man; and the old woman ate up all the rooster's meat. She tricked that old man by giving him only mushrooms.

II

Story of the Sun and the Moon

At first there was neither the sun nor the moon. And since they didn't exist, at first there was no earth either. The moon and the sun stayed in one place. The sun was a young man and the moon was a young woman. The two were sister and brother. That's how it was.

Since it was like that at first, there was neither sun nor moon. The night was dark; and since it was dark there wasn't a (single) person (living).

Now, the moon went and became a flower and stayed in a river. The sun, up above, had become a bull, and since he had done this, the flower stayed in the river.

One day the bull came down. Having come down, he saw the flower.

"Aha, there was no one before or now at this place.

"Where does this flower come from? I'll pick this flower and take it with me. And when I pick this flower, I'll keep it in my house." So saying, he began to go towards the flower. (But) the flower sank down into the water. The sun watched and watched until he couldn't watch anymore. Then the sun climbed up above.

"The flower won't let me touch it. If I cause poisoned-water to rain on it, the flower will come out." So saying, the sun caused poisoned rain to fall. When it rained, the flower became a young woman and came out. Then a house sprang up there.

The sun saw (this) from above. "Aha, a young woman! Where (has she come) from? The moon, my sister, (looked) like that. Is that her or isn't it? Well, I'll become a bull and go down and see."

So saying, he became a bull and went (down). When he went (down), the young woman wasn't able to see him. So the bull caught hold of her and lifted her up (into the sky).

The sun said: "Where were you?"

"And where did *you* come from -- like a crazy old man -- and grab me! I don't know you."

The sun replied: "You are my wife, I am your husband. Let's us two set up a household and live (together). And that's how it'll be for us."

And that's how it was. Then the moon said: "How can we live just by ourselves. There are no people here, no birds, how can we live? Let's make just one person; then you become the day and I'll be the night."

That's what the moon said. The sun said:

"All right, let's do it that way. You stay right here. I'll come out first and I'll go down and see."

After he said this, the sun became a bull down below and came out only once. Because of this it became day.

From then, the sun would come out and be a bull. The people saw him once and caught the bull and slaughtered him. Then they cut him up and threw the meat into their mouths to eat. But his spirit went up and to his wife he said: "No, from now on I won't go down, and I won't become a bull. If I go down, they will say I am beef and they'll slaughter me and cut me up and eat me." After he said that, his wife didn't let him go. (Ever) afterwards he didn't go below. He would only go from one side to another just above the clouds.

Later on, he had many children. The moon had fewer children. The sun's children and the sun shone. When it got too hot, because of that the moon said: "Your children eat too much; I shall eat my portion (too)." After she said this to the sun, the sun ate up all his children. (But) the moon's children all still were there.

Later, the sun said: "Let's see your children."

So then he saw that the moon still had (her) children (stars), but there were none at all of the sun's children (left).

Then the sun got angry and beat the moon. One side of the moon was cut off; and here the story of the moon's light ends.

III

The Ghost Boy

There were two women and a girl. The girl said: "O aunt, O mother, how shall we live? Here there is no young man, no boy. How shall we go on living?"

"O girl, why do you worry? Tomorrow, or the next day, somewhere or other I'll find a boy and bring him back here."

(So saying) the following morning her mother went out to look. A ghost-boy was sitting on his grave; he'd been slapped down by fever.

"O aunty, where are you going?"

"Well, boy I have this niece, and I've been going (around) looking for a young man."

"Say, aunty, I'll come myself!"

"Well, come on then son, let's go. You'll like her." So she invited the ghost-boy home.

"Take a look at who I have invited and brought home, girl! The young woman said: "You brought a good one, mother." And so they wed.

Now, at night, the young man would go to another village and would drink several people's blood. Then he would come back. One day the young woman saw this and then two days she watched (and saw) that this one wasn't a young man; this one was a ghost-boy.

"I won't stay with him! I'll go away somewhere." So saying, the girl fled.

Her mother and the ghost chased after her. The young woman entered the house of a witch. The witch said: "It's good you came, girl, there's chicken, there's rice and vegetables; if you cook (them)(you can) eat and give me some. The young woman roasted the chicken, boiled the rice and cooked some meat. Then she took out some of it, served it and gave it to the witch to eat. So they ate.

"O girl, go and sleep on this mat."

The young woman went to sleep. That night the witch kept lifting her head and putting it down again, saying: "I shall eat that young woman!" The young woman opened her eyes. Then she thought: "This one's a witch; I won't stay here!"

So the young woman fled and the witch came running after her. But the young woman crossed over to the other side of a river. The witch came to the bank of the river and fell fast asleep, saying "If you come here, I shall go and eat you." Saying this, she fell fast asleep.

Later, a boatman came along and said (to her): "Where do you come from?"

(The witch replied:) "Uh, well, our daughter ran away and I have come here (in search of her.)"

"That s not your daughter, you witch! I won't let you stay here." And saying this, he stabbed her and threw her right into the river.

IV

Crab Story

There were two people, an old man and an old woman.

There was also one daughter. They brought a son-in-law (home) for her.

"O nephew" they called him.

And to his father-in-law, he replied: "What, uncle?"

"Say, nephew, you stay and be a son-in-law for my daughter," he said.

"All right, then, uncle, I'll stay."

And that's how it was.

One day, his father-in-law said to his nephew: "Say, nephew."

"What, uncle?"

"Nothing, nephew, but today go catch and bring home two crabs."

"OK, uncle, I'll do that," he said. So he took a stick and fish-trap and went to the river. Then, he filled the trap with crabs, like, ⁷ and brought them home. That night, they were cooked and he fed them to his father-in-law and mother-in-law. Then his father-in-law started suddenly to defecate on his sleeping-place. And his mother-in-law began vomiting the crabs on top of the old man.

"Hey, old woman, here I am defecating on my sleeping place and you come out and vomit on me!"

"Hey, old man, so did I see you! You were sleeping (there) in the dark."

That's the way it was.

Then the nephew said to his uncle: "If you ate even more, wouldn't that have been good!!!"

"No, nephew, that's just the way my stomach is. Today, I'll go catch crabs, nephew and I'll give them to you to eat." Saying this, the old man went to catch crabs. He went and put his hand into a crab hole. Then a crab bit him on the hand. The old man bent over into the hole and was silent. The crab kept biting and pinching (him) and he couldn't pull himself back out. And because of that, the old man, unable to move from there, died.

NOTES

¹Gorum (also known as Parengi, Pareng, Parenga in the early literature) is a Munda (tirbal) language spoken primarily in Koraput District, Orissa, and also in some adjacent areas of Andhra Pradesh. It is a sister language of the better-known Sora (or Savara) or Ganjam, Koraput and neighboring districts.

²*Pendom*: rice and/or millet beer; *ali*: distilled liquor usually of the *sakio* tree, *Caryota urens*.

³See Immanuel Velikovsky. *Worlds in Collision* (New York: 1950), and *Earth in Upheaval* (New York: 1955).

⁴It is worth noting, incidentally, that the stories collected and published by Verrier Elwin (*Bondo Highlander*, 1950, and *Tribal Myths of Orissa*, 1954.) from, presumably, these same Koraput Munda groups seem to bear little or no resemblance to any stories collected and transcribed in the original languages by various members of the University of Chicago Munda Language Project (e.g., F. Fernandez, N. Zide, A. Zide, K. Mahapatra, B. Mahapatra, S. Starosta, et al.), or by others (e.g., S. Bhattacharya, H. J. Pinnow).

⁵man or maund, forty seers; i.e., eighty-four pounds.

⁶*inger*: young man of marriageable age, past puberty.

⁷N.B. The almost exactly analogous use in Gorum (and some other Munda languages) of *lukun*, 'like,' with a slang use in English of a concessive "like."

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